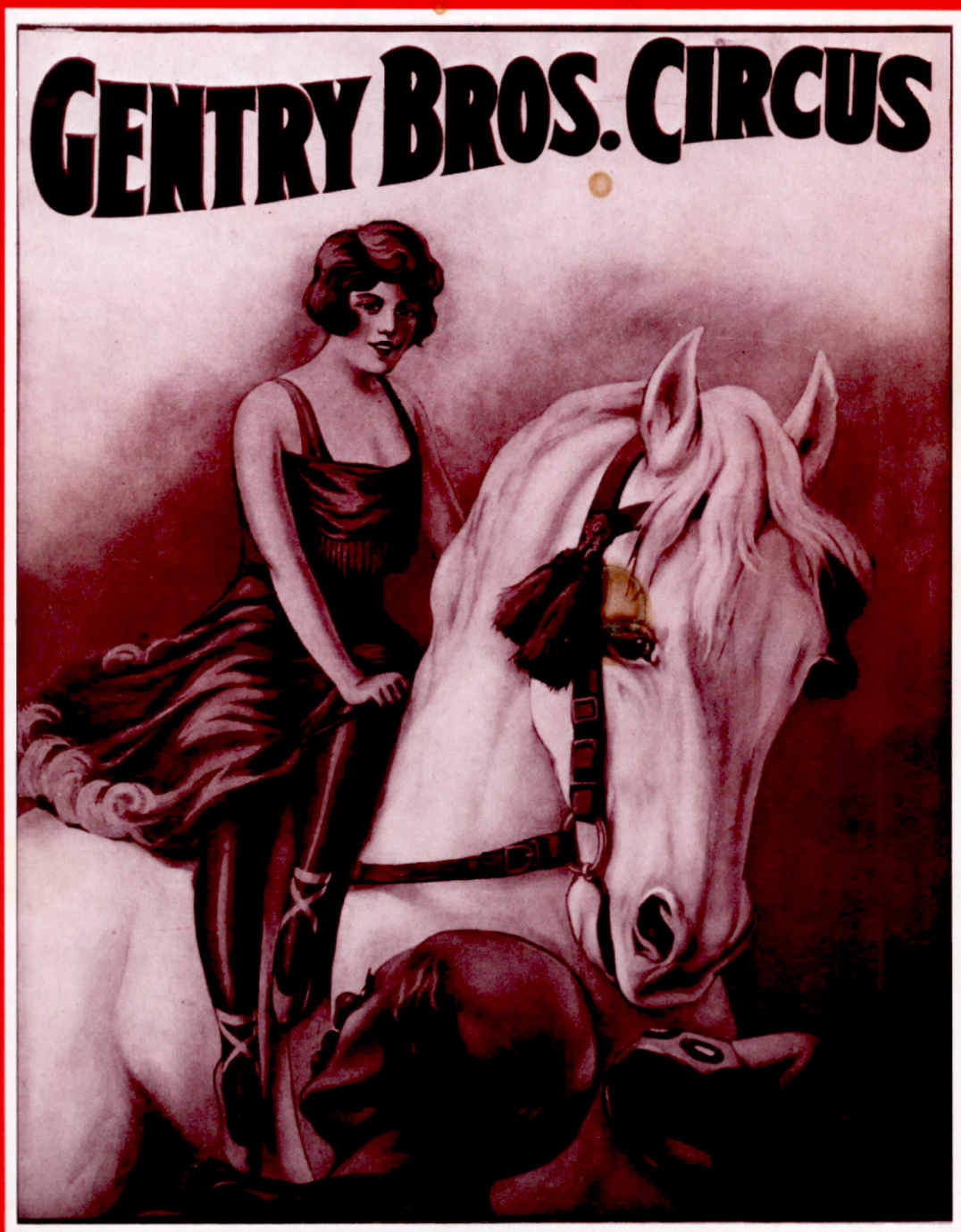


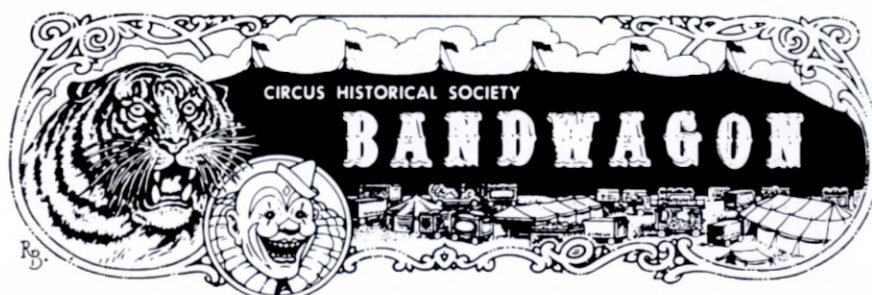
# Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1978





# THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Vol. 22, No. 5 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1978

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor  
Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

In line with the Floyd and Howard King railroad circuses of the 1920s a special illustration has been selected this issue.

The cover illustration is from a window card used by Gentry Bros. Circus on September 21, 1928, almost fifty years to the day that this is being written.

The card was lithographed in soft colors, with green covering the background of the lower portion. The lady rider's costume is coral red. The title is in red outlined in black. The original window card is from the Don F. Smith Collection.

### CHRISTMAS ISSUE NEXT

The next issue is our giant special Christmas edition, hopefully double the usual number of pages. A large number of fine articles will appear. The size of the issue is dependent upon the amount of advertising published.

Each CHS member and Bandwagon subscriber can make a special contribution by taking a Christmas greetings ad in the November-December issue. The rates are: full page \$65, half page \$35 and quarter page \$18.00. The minimum ad is \$12.00. Please send your ad copy and check to arrive by November 15, 1978.

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### CHARLIE CAMPBELL CHARTER MEMBER

In our last issue a list of the founding members that are still members of the Circus Historical Society was published.

We failed to include Charlie Campbell who carries the membership number 10. Mr. Campbell is alive and well and is a current member of the organization.

### CIRCUS MEMORABILIA WANTED

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16 page Gentry Circus courier, presumed 1925, cover missing	\$15.00
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# THE FLOYD AND HOWARD KING RAILROAD CIRCUSES 1925-30

by Joseph T. Bradbury

## Part V — Gentry Bros. and Cole Bros. Circuses The 1929 Season

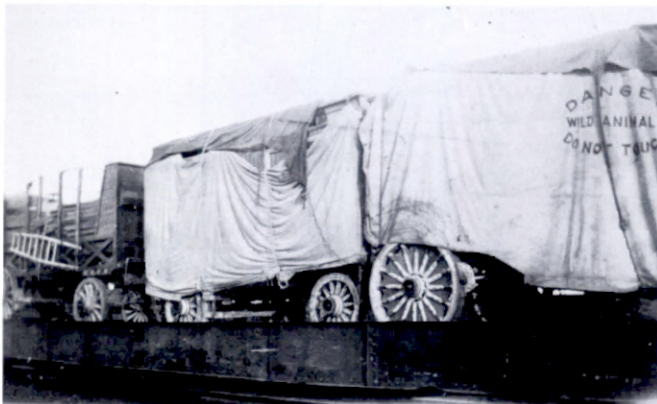
During the winter of 1928-29 the King brothers two circuses for the first time were separated. The 15 car Gentry Bros. show was housed in Dayton, Ohio utilizing buildings formerly occupied by the Barney and Smith Car Co. while the 10 car circus, newly titled Cole Bros. World Toured Shows, was at the fairgrounds in Alexandria, La.

The final weeks of the 1928 tour had been bad for the Gentry show and as a result there was a serious shortage of operating funds. However the physical equipment was in good condition and needed little repair work. The smaller show, titled Walter L. Main for the 1928 season, had a much more remunerative season than Gentry, however the equipment was terribly run-down and a thorough overall would be necessary.

During the winter Howard King remained in Dayton looking after Gentry while Floyd stayed in Alexandria and took personal charge in the renovation of Cole Bros. The brothers hoped that their financial setback caused by the slim take in 1928 was only temporary and that the new season would put them back on top again.

We are very fortunate to have as a part of this installment the complete inventory from the Pfening collection of the Gentry Bros. Circus when it was offered for sale in the fall of 1929. This

Photo No. 2 - Gentry Bros. loaded flat car, probably 1929. Center wagon with the canvas tarp is the ticket wagon. Joe Bradbury Collection.



(Season-1929)

### GENTRY BROS.

BIG 4 RING

## CIRCUS

\$750,000. CAPITAL INVESTED 2 SPECIAL R.R. TRAINS

500—PEOPLE—500	<p><b>NOW ENLARGED TWICE IN SIZE.</b></p> <p><b>NO WHERE ELSE CAN SO MUCH BE SEEN FOR SO LITTLE.</b></p> <p><b>IN 40 YEARS IT HAS GROWN TO BE THE WONDER CIRCUS.</b></p>
400—ANIMALS—400	
5—BANDS—5	
5,000—SEATS—5,000	
30—AERIALISTS—30	
60—ACROBATS—60	
60—RIDERS—60	
2—GREAT HERDS OF ELEPHANTS—2	

GALA, GOLDEN STREET PARADE AT 11 A.M.  
DOORS OPEN AT 1 & 7 P.M. PERFORMANCES 1 & 7 P.M.

### YAZOO CITY 30

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

Tickets on sale at Carr's Drug Store Show Day Only

Newspaper advertisement for Gentry Bros. stand at Yazoo City, Miss., Sept. 30, 1929. Joe Bradbury Collection.

listing of the physical equipment gives a detailed look at the 15 car show during its final year on the road. It might be mentioned that essentially it was virtually the same size and composition from the 1926 through 1929 seasons. Since the inventory was an official document it is assumed to be correct, although it does pose a few minor problems which will be mentioned at the proper time.

Another important research tool which I have made considerable use of is the notes and recollections sent me by Bette Leonard, former president of the Circus Historical Society. She and her husband, Bobby Zenero, were on the Gentry Bros. show for much of the 1929 season. She first sent me these notes for a major article I wrote in the Sept.-Oct. 1954 issue of *The White Tops* titled, "Gentry Bros. 1929 Season". This particular issue is still in print and copies may be obtained from the editor, Walter B. Hohenadel, Rochelle, Illinois, 61068. The various notations about weather conditions, business done, and day by day happenings on the 1929 Gentry tour furnished by Bette have been invaluable in putting together this particular installment.

The business of getting the King owned circuses ready for the 1929

Photo No. 3 - Gentry Bros. tableau wagon covered with canvas tarp enroute to lot, season of 1929. Joe Bradbury Collection.







Photo No. 1 - Gentry Bros. train unloading, season of 1929. Note the new Warren built stock cars in rear. Joe Bradbury Collection.

season started early and the Jan. 5, 1929 *Billboard* carried the following advertisement.

"GENTRY BROS. CIRCUS, SEASON OF 1929, WANTS FOR SIDE SHOW. Attractions of every description. Freaks and Curiosities, Novelty acts, Sword Swallower, Milo Laraway, answer. Four lady dancers and Inside Lecturer, doing Punch. Also ticket sellers capable of making second openings. Turkish Bass Drummer and Feature Acts. Pin-Heads and Aztecs, also Lady with Snake Act and Flageolet Player. Musical act, Troupe of Hawaiian Musicians, also Italian accordion act; Colored musicians and minstrel talent, Lady Soubret, Singers, and Dancers for same. Photos and particulars in first letter. James Shropshire, Manager, Sideshow, P.O. Box 234, Maysville, Ky."

The Jan. 12, 1929 *Billboard* gave the first news from the Cole quarters in Alexandria, La. mentioning again that the title of the show had been changed from Walter L. Main to that of Cole Bros. World Toured Circus (Author's note: The term circus and shows were interchanged constantly). The article said that the show's equipment was being entirely rebuilt and overhauled and it will be up to the standard of excellence maintained by the owners in previous years. A final note said that Joe Secastin, superintendent of elephants and menagerie had received a shipment of animals from Ellis Joseph the latter part of December.

Later in the month the trade publication said that Mike Carey who had painted the Sparks Circus for the last nine years has left Macon for Alexandria where he will head the paint shops of Cole Bros. Another item mentioned that Al Clarkson who had served as a contracting agent for the King brothers shows for several years had left and now signed with Rubin & Cherry Shows, railroad carnival.

The few photographs of the 1929 Cole Bros. Circus which have turned up

indicate that Mike Carey did do a very fine job in painting the show for that season. Especially do the tableau wagons look attractive.

The Feb. 2, 1929 *Billboard* covered the recent activities of the Gentry show in quarters in Dayton, Ohio. The baggage horses and ring stock are quartered on the aviation field adjacent to the quarters site and other animals are housed in a three story brick building. Harry Miller is in charge of the commissary and cookhouse. Elephants are in charge of Eugene "Arky" Scott and are being rehearsed daily. They have been booked for 8 weeks of indoor shows. William Rawls has arrived to paint the show and M.E. Mervin, supt. of the electrical department is getting his equipment in shape. The program of renovating the equipment has begun. Final notes said that the street parade will again be one of the features of the show and the show would have some new canvas and a program that would surpass that of 1928.

Later in February Fred Nelson was signed by Gentry as equestrian director and the Rojas Duo was engaged for another season with the show.

In early March Gene Staats, manager of the Gentry Bros. advertising car placed an ad in the *Billboard*

Photo No. 6 - Gentry Bros. train in rail yards at Lanconia, N. H. Loaded flats are in center and the Warren built stock cars are at left. Definite date is unknown as show played Lanconia in both 1928 and 1929 but date of this photo is believed to be July 26, 1929. Joe Bradbury Collection.



Photo No. 4 - Gentry Bros. band in front of the Russia tableau wagon, season of 1929. Bandmaster John Griffin stands at right. Joe Bradbury Collection.

wanting union billposters, bannermen, and lithographers and could also use a few students.

The March 9, 1929 *Billboard* told about activities at the Cole Bros. quarters in Alexandria. With springlike weather in evidence much of the work of rebuilding and repainting the show is going forward out in the open. The show will be ready for the road by the latter part of the month. Mike Carey has finished the last of the parade wagons. A new shipment of wardrobe has been received with more expected from the New York firm the latter part of the month. An order of new canvas and sideshow banners has been received from Driver Brothers. W.J. Erickson, assistant manager is back in quarters now and Ray Marsh Bryden, sideshow manager for the coming season, has arrived with Ike and Mike, twin midgets. Ed Reed, cookhouse superintendent, is feeding more than 50 daily. The article also mentioned that two parade wagons had been built at the quarters during the winter with the carvings done by Sam Burgess, head of the wood working department. (Author's note: There is no evidence of any new wagons as such being built, although it is possible some additional carvings or other decorations were added to existing vehicles. Conceivably a couple of small cart like vehicles could have





been built but certainly no major tableau wagons).

Later in March Cole Bros. signed Jimmie Woods as equestrian director for the coming season. He had been with Hagenbeck-Wallace for the past two years. With Cole Bros. he would also stage an opening spec. Billie Burke, female impersonator, also signed for his second season to clown with the 10 car show.

Back in Dayton the Gentry show signed Charles Robinson to do the male lead in the spec and clowning in the performance. The April 4, 1929 *Billboard* had an up-date on activities at the Gentry quarters saying that the decorations and artistic work on the rolling stock and equipment is being supervised by E.L. (Yellow) Burnett, assisted by William Rawls and his crew. Capt. Borland, domestic stock trainer, has the dogs and ponies working in fine shape. He is breaking leaping greyhounds and racing dogs and Arky Scott and assistants are breaking the zebras. Deacon Albright, veteran steam calliope player, is awaiting the call. He will also handle the press back with the show this season. There were a number of other items mentioned which are questionable. One said that the show would have two foreign troupes in the performance this season, the Seven Gallatines, acrobatic act, and the Salvaredoes. No further reference is made of these acts and they are not listed in the review of the opening performance. Possibly the acts joined later in the season but that is doubtful. The other questionable news items said that Ellis S. Joseph, animal importer, had been a visitor at quarters for a few days and while there had sold the show a large Bengal tiger, a collection of birds, two polar bears, and two more zebras to replace the ones lost during the winter, all of which was possibly correct, however the mention that Joseph also sold the show two small elephants has to be in error. Another obvious error in the report was that B.H. Mathis of the Warren Tank Car Co. had visited recently and secured an order for two more steel flats to be added to the train making a total of 17 cars. The show moved on 15 cars as before.

**Photo No. 7 - Gentry Bros. big top on lot at Lanconia, N.H., probably July 26, 1929. At left is the Gollmar high skyboard tableau and at right the former Gollmar air calliope. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.**

The *Billboard* also reported that Indians will appear in the aftershow concert this season, replacing the usual wrestling exhibitions. They will reach quarters shortly after April 15 and will be in charge of Chief Running Wolf, of the Pine Ridge Reservation.

By the first of April the personnel rosters for both shows were complete and read as follows.

#### **Gentry Bros. 1929 Personnel Roster.**

King brothers, owners; Howard King, manager; Mrs. Howard King, secretary and treasurer; Ralph Woodward, auditor; Karl Knudson, general agent; H.L. Massie, local contractor; Ed Benoit, special agent; Henry Spencer, contracting press agent; A.C. Bradley, press agent back; (also assisted by Deacon Albright) James A. Shropshire, manager sideshow; Fred Nelson, equestrian director; Sam McGowan, general supt.; Harry Lippman, supt. privileges; John Griffin, musical director; Sky Harris, supt. reserve seat tickets and announcer; E.S. Monroe, supt. canvas; Clint Graham, trainmaster; Joe Flynn, boss hostler; John Meade, supt. commissary dept.; M.E. Mervin, supt. lights; Arthur Berry, supt. props; William Carpenter, supt. ring stock; F.E. Weeks, supt. working crew; Arnold Sykes, 24 hour agent; Arky Scott, supt. elephants and animals; D.R. Stuart, boss carpenter; Frank Allen, blacksmith; Gene Staats, manager advance car No. 1; Joe Wilkens, checker-up; Joe Haworth, legal adjuster.

Also on the advance staff of Karl Knudson, general agent and traffic manager, was J.C. Admire, general contracting agent and Paul M. Conway, general press agent.

#### **Cole Bros. 1929 Personnel Roster**

King brothers, owners; Floyd King, manager, W.J. Erickson, asst. manager; Champ Simpson, auditor; L.C. Gillette, general agent and railroad contractor; Jerome Harriman, local contractor; Joe Collins, special agent; Foster Hunter, contracting

press agent; Paul Conway, general press agent (evidently did work for both shows), Ray Marsh Bryden, manager sideshow; Jimmie Wood, equestrian director; Dr. A.F. Roberts, physician; Jack Besser, supt. privileges; Bennie Fowler, musical director; T.D. Newland, supt. reserve seat tickets; Mark Smith, supt. canvas; Blackie Trainor, trainmaster; Abe Spencer, boss hostler; Ed Reid, supt. commissary dept.; Will Cilton, supt. shops; Bert Carroll, supt. props; Joe O'Donnell, supt. ring stock; Mike Carey, supt. painting dept.; Arthur Banks, supt. working crew; Fred Miller, 24 hour agent; William Hayes, supt. elephants; Sam Burgess, boss carpenter; George W. Walker, supt. animals; Thomas Gallagher, blacksmith; Al Clarkson, manager advance car No. 1; F.A. Patrick, checker-up; Gus Schwab, legal adjuster; William Campbell, assistant legal adjuster; Henry A. Todd, announcer.

An interesting note is that evidently in the early spring of 1929 long time elephant man, Moe Secastin, was replaced by William Hayes on the 10 car show. Also for the 1929 season Floyd King took a more active day by day roll as manager of the smaller show. He still spent considerable time away looking after advance matters for both shows but could be found on the lot of the 10 car show far more than in previous years.

Both shows had the same train lineup as for the previous season. Gentry Bros. travelled on 15 cars, 1 advance, 4 stocks, 6 flats, and 4 sleepers while Cole Bros. moved on 10 cars, 1 advance, 2 stocks, 4 flats, and 3 sleepers. Although the Gentry sale inventory notes that the 6 flat cars were all built by the Warren Tank Car Co. I am of the opinion that this is in error. Unfortunately there are no photos available to clarify this matter. Conceivably the show could have replaced the early style Mt. Vernon flat cars it had with new Warren built cars in the early spring of 1929 but the poor financial condition of the show makes this move highly unlikely. The older steel cars would have been completely adequate to make another season. Photos Nos. 1-3, comprise a set taken at the same time, either in 1928 or 1929

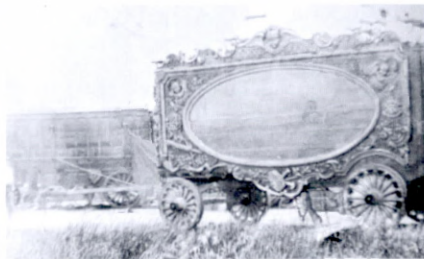


because of the appearance of the Warren built stock cars in the background of one of the shots. The flat cars shown are the ones that came from the Gentry-Patterson 1925 circus and as discussed in earlier installments were either early style Mt. Vernons or were built by a so far "unknown" manufacturer. I am of the opinion that these flats were still used by Gentry Bros. in 1929.

Both shows paraded in 1929 and the line-up of wagons should have been the same as in previous years. The parade wagons for both the 15 and 10 car shows were listed in the Sept.-Oct. 1977 *Bandwagon* and I am of the opinion there was no change in 1929. Again, unfortunately photographic coverage is not adequate to tell for sure. The late W.H. Woodcock Sr. once advised that the 1929 Gentry parade used the Russia tableau for the No. 1 bandwagon with the sideshow band on the Sparks Two Statue Tableau and clown band on one of the cages. The John Robinson steam calliope and Gollmar air calliope plus the ex Ringling Wolf and Birds, Winged Dragon (or Lion) Small Oval, and Large Oval tableaus were present as was the Gollmar heavy carved skyboard tab.

In the Cole Bros. parade the No. 1 band was on the Gollmar 4 Mirror Bandwagon, the No. 2 band on the Sparks Sea Serpent tab, clown band on the clown drop-frame bandwagon from 1925 Gentry-Patterson, and sideshow band on the Diamond carving tableau, also from 1925 Gentry-Patterson. The Gentry twin steam calliope brought up the rear of the march, and the Gollmar oval carving tab also was used in the parade.

It may be recalled that in 1928 there were a total of 11 elephants owned by the Kings, 6 on the 15 car show, and 5 on the 10 car circus. The combined herds consisted of Danny, Eva, Mama Mary (or Mom), Queen, Pinto, Modoc, Judy, Sally, Tillie, Topsy, and Vic. Sometime between the time the 1928 season ended and the 1929 began the last 5 named elephants were gone. Possibly they were sold to provide sorely needed operating funds, or some could have been repossessed by Ellis Joseph. Bette Leonard said that a number of animals that had been with Gentry



**Photo No. 5 - Large Oval tableau (Ringling No. 4) and baggage wagon on Gentry Bros. lot, season of 1929. Joe Bradbury Collection.**

Bros. had been taken back because the show had not been able to pay for them. In any event on opening day there were only 3 elephants in the Gentry herd, Danny, Eva, and Mama Mary (or Mom). Although there is no detailed account of the number of elephants on Cole Bros. provided by eyewitnesses or in the trade publications it is believed that show had only 3 in 1929, same number they had in 1930, Queen, Pinto, and Modoc.

Both shows continued with the same number of cages as in 1928, six on Gentry Bros., five on Cole.

The 1929 season had arrived. Business was strong, the economic health of the nation was in great shape, and a long and impressive list of circuses were ready to make the tour. For several, notably Ringling-Barnum, Sells-Floto, and Al G. Barnes it would be one of the best seasons ever. Most shows would go home with money in the grouch bag, but others such as the new Buck Jones Wild West Show, Silvan-Drew, and unfortunately for the Kings, Gentry Bros. the season would end in disaster.

Rail shows (flat car type) on the road in 1929 included Ringling-Barnum, 90 cars; Sells-Floto, 30 later enlarged to 40; Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30; John Robinson, 25; Al G. Barnes, 30; Sparks, 20; Robbins Bros. 25; Christy Bros., 20; Gentry Bros., 15; Cole Bros., 10; Miller

Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West, 30; and Buck Jones Wild West, 15. Also on the road was E.H. Jones 3 car Cole & Rogers Circus. Overland shows included Downie Bros., Mighty Haag, Barnett Bros., Seils-Sterling; Charles T. Hunt; Silvan-Drew; Honest Bill-Moon Bros.; M.L. Clark; Orton Bros.; Brison Bros.; Ketrow Bros.; Dorsey Bros.; Rose Killian; Mack Hale; Cook Bros.; Richard Bros.; Russell Bros.; Camel Bros.; and Robinson Bros.

Rail shows parading were Robbins Bros.; Sparks; Christy Bros.; Gentry Bros.; Cole Bros.; Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West, and Buck Jones Wild West. Most of the overland shows also featured the daily march.

Just before the two King shows opened the season the *Billboard* reported that Wesley LaPearl and J.W. Etheridge with their snake act would be with Cole Bros. and also that the show would play southern Indiana early in the season. Jerome Harriman, contracting agent, was reported to have recently booked stands at Princeton and Mt. Vernon.

Both Gentry Bros. and Cole Bros. relied heavily on advertising in 1929 as had been the custom in the past. Both had identical couriers with the appropriate title on the colorful front cover. Gentry continued to use billing paper from the Donaldson Lithographing Co. of Cincinnati while Cole Bros. began securing paper from National Show Print Co. of Chicago. No doubt many of the Cole designs had been used by Elmer H. Jones and other operators of the Cole title in the past. The show also used the same Cole letterhead design as had Jones.

Cole Bros. opened its 1929 season at Princeton, Ky. on April 17 after making a run of several hundred miles from its Alexandria, La. quarters. Strangely enough the *Billboard* had absolutely no review or even a summary of the Cole program, in fact very little concerning the Cole show was recorded in that publication throughout the 1929 season. Fortunately the Pfening collection has a copy of the 1929 Cole Bros. program which had a very colorful front cover design. The official title sheet advised that this was the 40th Annual Tour of the Cole Bros. Circus, The World's Highest Class

**Photo No. 8 - Gentry Bros. on lot at Lanconia, N.H., July 26, 1929. At left is the padroom and at right the big top. No. 34, Gollmar high skyboard tableau is in center. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.**





Amusement Institution, Season of 1929. James Woods was equestrian director and Bennie Fowler, musical director. The program was as follows.

**Cole Bros. 1929 Program**

Display No. 1 — Opening with the Unique and Gorgeous Spectacle, CINDERELLA. Presenting Miss Pearl Clarke, Prima Donna, and Miss Sylvia Cotter, Miss Rosemary Arthur, Miss Marie Kimball, Miss Jane Chisholm, Miss Mary Alpine, Miss Anna Harris. Fairies — Dancers — Singers — Natives — Pirates, etc.

2. A distinctive and distinguished European novelty, blending the most difficult acrobatic and gymnastic feats with precision and accuracy. THE RECKLESS RECKLAW TRIO BICYCLISTS.

3. Highly educated Shetland Ponies with Collie Dog Riders. RIDING DOGS, Mr. Abe Johnson.

4. Amazing gyrations in the dome of the big top on flying aerial ladders. AERIAL LADDERS, Miss Ruby Wood, Miss Dolly Collins, Miss Elsie Recklaw.

5. THE GREATEST HERD OF PERFORMING ELEPHANTS IN THE WORLD. Trained by Prof. Joe Secastin and exhibited by Miss Vonie King.

6. Equilibrists from the land of the Mikado, Kaichi Koban; Kitamura Bros.; A unique and pleasing club juggling novelty, presented by the Two Jordans; A varied muscular act of extraordinary interest, strength, and agility, Clare Bros.

7. A SENSATIONAL BAREBACK RIDING ACT, exhibiting remarkable grace, skill and daring, introducing difficult vaulting from ground to the back of a swiftly running horse. Miss Marguerite Crandell.

8. Amazing acrobats in an act teaming with thrill-making incidents. Stars of the Continental Music Halls of Europe. PEREZ-LAFLOR FAMILY.

9. Magnificent dogs in exhibitions of high jumping. Featuring "Diamond" highest jumping greyhound in America. HIGH JUMPING GREYHOUNDS, worked by Miss Irene Crawford.

10. SENSATIONAL DOUBLE TRAPEZE ACT, Characterized by Novelty, Nerve, and Grace. The Aerial Collins; B. Williams.

11. The fools' reunion of clowns extraordinary — they offer you the limit of good, wholesome fun and amusement, clever clumsiness and ready wit — they turn the darkest clouds into bright sunshine.

12. Skillful gymnasts and equilibrists in a pleasing aerial novelty. THE FLYING PERCH, Henry Abal, Neil McCrea, Andy Jenkins.

13. A direct importation of Europe's Two Greatest Riders by Cole Bros. The Crandells, THE WORLD'S GREATEST EQUESTRIANS.

14. A unique and pleasing novelty from the Antipodes. THE FURNITURE MOVERS, The Two Larkins.

15. EQUILIBRISTS IN EVOLUTIONS, illustrating an Amazing Exhibition of Strength, Grace and Muscular Control. The Montana Sisters.

16. MILITARY PONIES, in a remarkable exhibition of preciseness exhibiting almost human intelligence. Presented by their trainer, S. Johnson.

17. Kings of mirth from every clime in an international shindig. CLOWNS, CLOWNS, CLOWNS. Horace Laird, Orville Valier, Harold Morgan, Billie Burke, Alvin Matson, Roy Cousins, Earl Axmacher, Bassill A. Williams, Arnom Jackson, Tom Patricola, Herb

Photo No. 9 - Steam calliope (formerly John Robinson) pulled by 4 horse hitch in Gentry Bros. street parade, Lanconia, N.H., July 26, 1929. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



Artello, Phil King, R.L. Bowen, Andrew Kelly, Clinton Booth.

18. EUROPEAN GYMNASTIC MARVELS. The Ernestine Troupe of Acrobats.

19. A Thrilling high-air divertissement. Dainty and daring human butterflies of the mid-air. A pleasing exhibition of skill and daring. Miss Jamie Laflor, Miss Ruby Wood, Miss Bessie Clark.

20. Funny old clown band under the personal direction of Horace Laird.

21. The petite and charming dancer on the tight wire. Imported direct from Berlin. Miss Geschwister Montana.

22. COLE BROS. BLUE RIBBON DANCING HORSES — Ridden by Miss Myrtle Barnett, Miss Dixie Fisher, Miss Bessie Clark, and Miss Dolly West.

23. HIPPODROME ACTS — Directed by Jimmie Wood. First Event — Clown Cart Race — Mr. Nicholson, Mr. Burroughs. Second Event — Cowboy and Cowgirl Race — Mr. Jacobson, Miss Dever. Third Event — Gents' Flat Race — Mr. Jamison, Mr. Larkins, Mr. Logan. Fourth Event — Pony Race — Monkey Riders. Fifth Event — Roman Chariots — Mr. Parkins, Mr. Dekoke.

STAY AND SEE THE BIG WILD WEST AND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING MATCH IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BIG SHOW PERFORMANCE. Direction — Tex Crawford.

IKE AND MIKE, THE WORLD-FAMED TWIN MIDGETS. Will hold a reception immediately after the Concert and Wild West Show. These famous midgets were imported to America directly by the COLE BROS. CIRCUS. They are 24 inches tall; 27 years old and weigh but 30 lbs. They were born in Budapest, Hungary.

After the opening Cole Bros. continued in Kentucky with dates at Providence, Central City and Madisonville then moved into Indiana with first stand at Mt. Vernon, April 22, which was followed by other Hoosier state dates at Princeton, and Huntingburg. Karl K. Knecht, prominent circus fan of the day, caught the show at Princeton, Ind. on April 23 and wrote in *The Billboard* as follows.

"They have an excellent program and feature two German girls who have a real novelty in feats of strength. They recently arrived in the country from Havanna where they did some winter work after coming from Circus Busch in Berlin, Germany. Modoc, the well known bull is a star. Everything was new and looked fine in their fifth stand."

Cole then moved over into Illinois with first stand coming at Mt. Carmel, followed by Harrisburg, Carmi, Mt. Vernon, Benton, Herrin, Murphysboro, Belleville, Staunton, Granite City, Alton, Litchfield, Centralia, Olney, and Columbia. May 13 found the show back



in Indiana at Linton with 8 other stands in the state to follow.

During this second tour of Indiana Floyd King wrote an interesting letter to Karl K. Knecht on Cole Bros. Greatest World Toured Shows stationary with same design as pictured in this article. The letter is now in the files of the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wis. and reads as follows:

Plymouth, Ind. May 21st, 1929  
Mr. Karl Kae Knecht,  
Evansville, Indiana  
Friend Karl:

Surely trust you will pardon delay in answering your recent favor. For the past several weeks we have had nothing but rain and storms and I have gotten behind in my correspondence. Never saw a Spring with so much rain. Everyone around the show has been worked to a frazzle. But we are moving nicely. A ninety mile jump into here and we arrived at 6:30 A.M. We are moving okay, but it has been a task.

Main has not been mailing out any letters in about three weeks now. I think the circular we got out has taken the wind out of his blackmailing letters. So I don't think we will be bothered with him from that angle.

I am enclosing you several of the circulars we had printed in Evansville when near there. You are at liberty to mail them or use as you see fit, only please don't make any mention in your Circus Fans Magazine. As I figure the least said about it is the better. I will explain when I see you. I got a nice letter this morning from Mr. B.E. Siebert at Green Bay, Wis. where we play June 6th. And I am looking forward with pleasure in seeing him again.

Barnes, Christy and the B and B show all will go into Western Canada.

I will close for this time. Will drop you a line from time to time.

With best wishes, I beg to remain,  
Yours gratefully,  
s—Floyd King—  
Mgr., Cole Bros. Circus

For some reason Walter L. Main had evidently been mailing out "rat sheet" letters against the Kings and especially in advance of the 10 car show which had used his title in 1928. Just what Main's primary beef against the Kings is not known to the author unless the bad feeling that had built up between him and Howard King during the past couple of seasons was still making itself manifest in his actions. It might be recalled in his interview Floyd said that Main had gone ahead of the show a few seasons earlier tearing it down and they they had to sweeten him with a little extra money for the use of his title to quiet him down. The contents of the circular that Floyd mentioned in the letter to Knecht are not known to the author. Should any reader have a copy of same in his collection we would like to print it as a supplement later on.



Photo No. 10 - Gentry Bros. Nine sheet billing litho featuring the "7 Janet Sisters, Europe's Greatest Acrobatic and Gymnast Marvels" was used by the King brothers show in the late 1920's. Actually there was no act by this name on the Gentry Bros. Circus. Fred Pfening Jr. Collection.

The bad weather King mentioned plagued shows throughout a goodly portion of the country during the early weeks of the 1929 season, in fact rough weather was a fact of life in the late 1920's. It was the inclement weather encountered by especially the Gentry Bros. show during much of the previous season which more than anything else had brought on the present financial crisis for the Kings. Now, with more of the wet and cold stuff during the early going in 1929, it was certain that the money situation would get worse before any hope of getting better.

Valparaiso, May 22, was the final stand in Indiana for Cole Bros. then the show went again into Illinois for dates at Harvey, Pontiac, Dixon, and Freeport, and on May 28 entered Wisconsin at Portage. Sparta and Wausau followed and on the final day of the month the show was in Marshfield.

Gentry Bros. opened its 1929 season on April 26 at Middletown, Ohio and according to the Bette Leonard notes there was such a packed house at night it was impossible to put on the opening spec. *The Billboard* sent a reporter to cover the Gentry opening and his review appeared in the May 4, 1929 issue. It read as follows:

"Middletown, O., April 27 — The Gentry Bros. Circus as it did last year

opened here yesterday, but under more favorable conditions. Last year it was cold and rainy, but this year an ideal day prevailed. As a result there was a very good matinee attendance and a big night house. The program is presented under a 100 ft. top with three 40 ft. middles, and in three rings. The program with a variety of acts, is a good one. Several of the features of last year, O'Neill Trio, Buckley Brothers and Dalbeanie, have been retained and a number of others added. There was no dress rehearsal. The direction of the program is in the capable hands of Fred Nelson and the musical end of it under the leadership of John Griffin, who has been with the Gentry Show for several seasons.

#### Gentry Bros. 1929 Program

1. The program opens with a nicely dressed spec in which the entire company participates, and Miss Schultz is the prima donna.
2. Pony drill, six animals in one ring, and six in another were well handled by Mrs. Wallace and Capt. Borland.
3. Fine and fast swinging perch work was done by Zenero and Satiro.
4. The O'Neill Trio, two working comedy, again scored with their feats on the horizontal bars.
5. Walkaround by the clowns.
6. The veteran Willie Clark and Nagami, Jap, do some exceedingly neat foot juggling, the former using a barrel and the latter an umbrella.
7. The Great Dalbeanie again is presenting his fine wheel act. One of his feats is that of jumping up a pair of stairs on the wheel.
8. Three swinging ladder numbers, in which Miss Buckner, Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Rojas take part.
9. Concert announcement.



10. Riding act by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Poplin.

11. Clowns in the 'aerial bride'.

12. Bobby and Betty Zenero and the Aerial Clarks, in double trapeze, and Arthur Burson, in a single trapeze number.

13. Elephant display, in which one elephant is in one ring, and two in another, presented by Mrs. Wallace and 'Arkansas' (Arky Scott).

14. Posing by Caroline Derossitt, Mr. Underhill and Mr. Poplin.

15. The Rojas, on the revolving ladder, and Dalbeane, on an upright ladder.

16. Clown number.

17. St. John Trio and the Buckley Brothers, in hand balancing, and Satiro in a series of hand stands.

18. Clown band, directed by Jack Albion, who was with Sells-Floto for a number of years.

19. Arthur Burson, footslide.

20. Second concert announcement.

21. Menage display. Flo Buckner, Mrs. Wallace, Mrs. Zenero, and Mrs. Poplin.

22. Two Underhill Sisters in an iron-jaw slackwire number, and Arthur Burson on the slackwire.

23. Clowns.

24. Mrs. Rojas and Mrs. Underhill in an iron-jaw number.

25. The Buckley Brothers, O'Neill Trio and the St. Johns put over a dandy comedy acrobatic number.

26. Riding act put on by Indians.

"In the line-up of joeys are Paul White, Frank Baer Trio, Stubb Stover, George Emery, Jack Albion, Robert Lavelle, Art Shaw, Doc Campbell, and Mickey O'Brien.

"Following the big show program comes the Wild West concert in which Mr. and Mrs. Charles Poplin, Miss Buckner, Howard Underhill and 12 Indians present feats of riding, roping, whip cracking, etc.

"The side show, with a nice line of attractions, is again under the management of James Shropshire. It includes Prof. Mike Silka, inside lecturer, magic and Punch; Prof. Oscar, tattooed man; Abdalha, fire eater; Bendeab, sword swallower; St. Elmo, accordionist; Mayme Gilmore, with big snakes; Princess Rose, Mme. Depue, Miss Dollie, Hawaiian troupe; Outten Troupe, musical artists; Everett White's band and minstrel show of 12 people. Goldie Thomas and Irene Young, soubrettes; Stanley Becket and Flossie Ingram, comedians; Billie Roulis, Barnie Meehan and Edward Larkin, ticket sellers; W.A. Hamm, superintendent annex door; Dad Harris, superintendent annex front; and L.L. Nuckner in charge of canvas with 14 men.

"In the menagerie are a number of animals, including three elephants, four camels, two lions, tiger, leopard, panther, polar and black bears, emu,

ponies, monkeys and an Indian village.

"Howard King is manager of the Gentry show and his wife in charge of the front door. Sky Harris is back again as superintendent of tickets and official announcer; also E. Deacon Albright, calliope player and on tickets. Fred Coleman is the bannerman."



**Photo No. 11 - Gentry Bros. elephant car No. 50 on a siding at the Warren Tank Car Co. plant, Warren, Pa. Photo is believed to have been taken in the fall of 1929 after the car was repossessed following bankruptcy of the Gentry Bros. Circus. Photo by Frank Norton.**

After the opening the show then moved over into Indiana at Connersville where there was fair business with rain at night. New Castle, Ind. on April 29 gave a good take and there was a runaway team in the street parade which caused considerable excitement. The following day in Elwood, Ind. during the performance an Indian rode his horse into the blues injuring five persons. After a fair days business in Frankford, Ind. May 1 the show then hit a seige of extremely bad weather. It was very cold with snow flurries in Crawfordsville, May 2, and the show gave only a matinee. At Green Castle the next day the sun shown but there was a very cold wind blowing most of the day but business was still pretty good. The final stand in Indiana, Brazil, May 4, was a mean one weatherwise. It rained all day and the lot was two inches under water. Moving over into Illinois for a date at Hooperstown, May 6, didn't escape the bad weather as it was very cold at night. A final stand in Illinois came at Chicago Heights where business was bad. Returning to Indiana the next day the show was at Hammond where there was a lot of excitement in town as three gangsters from nearby Chicago were killed. The Gentry show had a cold and rainy day when it played Rochester on May 9 and the long haul to the lot made it a rough stand. Five years later Rochester would become the winter home of the Adkins and Terrell version of Cole Bros. Circus. Two more Indiana dates were played, Huntington and Decatur,

the latter seeing a bad storm at night.

Gentry returned to Ohio at Kenton, May 13, where it again encountered rain and had opposition from the King Wild West Show. The following day in Ashland it rained all day causing the street parade to be cancelled and the matinee late in starting.

Bette Leonard recorded in her diary that the final day in Ohio, Barbeton,

May 14, was the first really pretty day of the season so far. There was only a light matinee crowd but a good house on hand at night.

The show moved next into Pennsylvania with initial stand at Sharon, May 16. The lot there was wet and muddy and located on the top of a hill so no parade was given. The following day in Greenville saw the show set up on a terrible lot but the parade went out as scheduled, then it was on to Grove City where the rains came back. After a Sunday off the show gave two performances in Butler, May 20, where again the show was set up on a terrible lot and the rains came forth in the evening. The show continued with a string of 12 more consecutive dates in the Keystone State and Bette Leonard's notes described them as follows: Franklin, no parade, cold at night; New Kensington, paraded, only fair business; McKeesport, paraded in the rain, No. 26 wagon got stuck in the street car tracks during the parade. Monongahela, nice day; Brownsville, lot located on top of a hill, no parade; McKees Rocks, train had a late arrival but gave a five o'clock parade; Meyersdale, rotten business. The show then moved into West Virginia for a single stand at Martinsburg on Decoration Day, May 30, but no parade was given. Gentry returned to Pennsylvania and on the final day of May was at Chambersburg where the weather finally got real hot.

Although its coverage of the Gentry show was quite sparse the *Billboard* did carry a few reports on the circus after its opening. The June 8, 1929 *Billboard* said that 23 days of rain interspersed with five days of sunshine has been the Gentry Bros. show allotment thus far, with snow flurries and sleet joining in with wind and rain at Crawfordsville, Ind. However, the matinee performance



was given here, but the night performance was called off, and after seven hours of struggling the show moved on to its next stand. Brownsville, Pa. gave the show a good day's business, and under the supervision of Joe Wallace, boss hostler, and Walter Baird, superintendent of motor equipment, the show moved up and down the two mile paved mountain without the slightest accident. The circus train, however did not arrive in McKees Rocks until noon, due to railroad handling and delays in the Pittsburgh yards. A final note said that James Taulbee Jr., brother of Mrs. Howard King, joined at Kittanning, Pa. and is on the front door. He expects to return to college this fall.

The June 15, 1929 *Billboard* said that Martinsburg, W. Va. Decoration Day stand gave the Gentry show a capacity matinee, but only fair business at night. Chambersburg, Pa. was fair. At McKees Rocks, Milton Woodward returned from the advance to assume his duties on the big show staff. The article noted that the show now has a new big top, candy stand, and pit show top. A final notation said that Sky Harris is superintendent of ticks and serves as the big show announcer. On several occasions he has been announcing over the radio.

In late June the *Billboard* said that Joe Haworth and M.H. McLean, adjusters with Gentry Bros. have severed connections with the show. These were the first of several personnel changes that would be made in that organization over the next couple of months.

Other miscellaneous items about the Gentry show that appeared in the *Billboard* during its first six weeks on the road said that the show was the first railroad circus to play Rochester, Ind. in 19 years, the last being Hagenbeck-Wallace when it was owned by Ben E. Wallace. Mrs. James Shropshire, wife of the sideshow manager, was struck by an auto and seriously injured in Dayton, O. back on April 24. Ray Glaum, iron jaw performer and female impersonator clown who worked the come-in, joined the show after it had been cut for a few weeks. He also appeared in a dancing number in the spec. A note said that several suits had been brought against the show by parties injured when the Indian rode a pony into the seats at Elwood, Ind. mentioned here earlier, and additional items said that James M. Cole was back on the Gentry show as timekeeper and in charge of the commissary department. Formerly he had been an assistant to Ralph Woodward in the red wagon. Final note in the *Billboard* files said that Sky Harris had written in that the sun had shown but very occasionally during the trip through Pennsylvania.

In the meantime the *Billboard* had covered Cole Bros. activities very sparingly. The April 27, 1929 issue said

that Bud Valier enroute to join Cole Bros. had stopped off in Chicago and visited Tom Barron and Grover Mitchman with Sells-Floto. All had previously clowned on one of the King shows. The same issue mentioned that the Chamber of Commerce in Alexandria, La. had written to Floyd King a letter of thanks for his splendid cooperation during the winter stay of Cole Bros. at the Central Louisiana Fairgrounds. King had honored the city by naming one of the coaches in the train "Alexandria". While in quarters the letter said the show had renovated and repainted its equipment and spent considerable money for this purpose as well as for the purchase of other supplies.

Cole Bros. was at Stevens Point, Wis. on June 1 then continued with other Wisconsin dates at Waupaca, Manitowoc, Sturgeon Bay, and Green Bay and on June 7 moved over into northern Michigan at Menominee. An extensive tour of the copper country and upper Michigan peninsula followed which saw the show playing Iron Mountain, Iron River, Escanaba, Manistique, Sault Ste Marie, Newberry, Marquette, Ishpeming, Calumet, Hancock, and Ironwood. In 1928 the show then using the Walter L. Main title had played through much of this territory to pretty good business and Floyd King wanted to get another crack at the natives in the area. After the stand in Ironwood the show returned to Wisconsin for Ashland, June 21, then moved on to Minnesota for an 8 stand tour with initial date coming at Cloquet. The final day in June found the show on a Sunday run heading for its last stand in Minnesota, Thief River Falls, played on July 1.

Bros. was doing at this stage, however, according to Floyd King's interview the show apparently did okay until the last few days of the season. We are fortunate to have by way of the Pfening collection a copy of the Gentry Bros. daily statement for its stand at McKees Rocks, Pa. on May 28, 1929. This sheet gives us a in depth look at the 15 car show. It shows the prices charged for the big show, blues and reserves, the after-show concert, sideshow, and also the number and type of concessions carried that season. The list of expenditures is enlightening, giving the type and amount. Of special interest is the rather large fee charged by the railroad for transporting the show. Another item of primary interest is the fact that the show was operating with only a thin pencil line of profit. One or two really bad days would throw it in the red. Gentry Bros. Circus 1929 — Daily Statement for May 28th, 1929 (Taken from Original Cash Book). Bad hill at Brownsville. Did not get loaded until 7:00 A.M. Arrived at McKees Rocks, Pa. 1:00 P.M. Parade 5:00 P.M. Night Show Only. Stand Number 28, McKees Rocks, Pa. May 28, 1929.

	Receipts		
	No.	Price	Take
No. One Wagon —			
Hard Wholes	289	.75	\$216.75
No. One Wagon —			
Halves	42	.50	21.00
Uptown Wholes (Hard)	3	.75	2.25
Uptown (Hard) Halves	1	.50	.50
Uptown (Soft) Wholes	3	1.50	4.50
Door Cash			51.50
Inside Reserves	55	.75	41.25
Inside Reserves	32	.50	16.00
Inside Reserves	35	.25	8.75
Night Concert	80	.25	20.00
Side Show	633	.25	158.25
Candy Stands			63.05



Photo No. 12 - Sparks Sea Serpent tableau, No. 33, on the Cole Bros. lot, season of 1929. In center is Billie Dick and other performers in spec costumes. Joe Bradbury Collection.

Both shows had now been out approximately one and a half months into the 1929 season. We have no documentation as to how well Cole

Balloons	26.00
Hamburgers	20.00
Lunch Car Number One	32.75
Fortunes	1.15
Total Receipts	\$683.70
Receipts	683.70
Bal. brought forward	2,186.91
Total	\$2,870.61
Less Expenditures	1,806.14
Balance	\$1,064.47





#### Expenditures

Advance	
Livery	\$ 45.00
Newspapers	35.00
Orders	11.27
24 Hour Man	7.42
Flour	32.00
Locals	
Claims	4.00
Lot	75.00
Lot Expense	18.00
Transportation	
Freight	934.50
Sleepers	
Laundry	17.40
Lights	1.05
General Expense	
Shop Supplies	12.00
Misc.	3.95
Cook House	
Butter	8.32
Meat and Fish	113.70
Bread	9.38
Coal and Wood	12.00
Groc. and Vegts.	63.53
Ice	4.00
Stables	
Hay	22.39
Straw	8.95
Grain	29.40
Extra Truck Hire	63.00
Office	
Telegrams and Telephone	.71
Priv. car	9.41
Lights	
Gas & Oil	10.50
Repairs	46.52
Dining Car	
Ice	1.50
Pastry and Bread	9.47
Groc. meats & vegts.	41.02
Candy Stands	
Ice	2.65
Ice Cream	12.00
Pop	12.75
Misc. Stock	59.86
Hamburger Stock	32.64
Animals	
Hay	5.50
Grain	2.10
Meat	23.25
Others	
M. Warner — Usher	3.00
Total Expense	\$1,806.14

(Note: This is a complete report of all the earnings and expenditures for one day. With the weeks wages not being paid of this particular day, and thus not being entered here, and with the rare situation of not having to pay any

Photo No. 13 - Cole Bros. No. 2 band in parade, season of 1929. Wagon is No. 33, Sparks Sea Serpent tableau pulled by 4 horse hitch. Joe Bradbury Collection.

city or state fees, as well as several other "unaccounted for" items — and the fact that only one poorly attended performance was given, it can not be taken as a typical day, either financially or otherwise for this show. Taken from original Cash Book).

One interesting item on the Stables expenditure list is "extra truck hire — \$63.00". So far as we know neither of the King rail shows had any kind of truck or tractor to help the baggage stock move the wagons to and from the lot, however at many stands local dray vehicles were rented for this purpose. At times these local drays would even pull wagons in the street parade. Gentry Bros. had a person especially designated as motor superintendent to supervise the local drays rented along the route.

Gentry Bros. spent the first ten days in June in Pennsylvania and Bette Leonard recorded the following in her diary. June 1, Waynesboro, new big top up for the first time. (This was the new top mentioned in the *Billboard* article. It was a 100 ft. round with three 40 ft. middles). The show Sundayed on the second of June at Carlisle and two performances given the next day and between shows the performers rehearsed the new spec. Continuing with the Bette Leonard notes the show then moved to Milton where there was lovely weather and fair business; Boonsburg, fair business; Tamaqua, lot in town, close to rail cars; Mahoney City, Charley Sparks, former owner of Sparks Circus visited; Pittston, bum business; Waverly, Sundayed in town and very bad business on show date. The show then moved into New York with first date coming at Norwich on June 11, where there was lovely weather and business better, but the following day in Courtland the take was very poor. The Leonard diary covers the remainder of the New York

stands as follows: Oswego, no parade, business terrible; Newark, better business, nice weather; Seneca Falls, no notation made; Oneida, fair business; Rome, real hot; Fort Plain, real hot, better business; Chooes, good night house; Hudson, good matinee, very good night house; Peekskill, good matinee, good night house; White Plains, fair business, bad lot; Port Chester, late matinee, rained at night.

After Port Chester the Gentry show then moved over into Connecticut at South Norwalk on June 26 to begin a month's tour of New England. The show played two days in Connecticut, went into Massachusetts for one stand, then returned to Connecticut for three more engagements. Bette Leonard recorded the following: South Norwalk, Conn., a lady artist spent the day in the dressing room making sketches; Danbury, Conn., gave first parade in a week, good business; Great Barrington, Mass., fair business, rained; New Milford, Conn., lot close into town; Meriden, Sundayed and gave two performances there on Monday, July 1, where there was a very good matinee crowd and nice night house.

Cole Bros. moved into North Dakota on July 2 at Grafton and crossed the state playing Larimore, Leeds, Towner, and Williston.

Percy Turner, who at one time operated Turner Bros. Circus, recently told me that he caught Cole Bros. at his old home town of Larimore, N.D. on July 3, 1929. He said he didn't catch the main show that day but did take in the "cooch show". His older brother had heard there was a cooch show in conjunction with the sideshow and that the district attorney at Grand Forks, 28 miles away, was going out and close it down but that didn't happen at least not until after Percy saw the show. He says that there was a darned good looking girl performing the cooch dance but she made no effort to remove any of her clothes at the first showing. Then he and his brother paid the additional 50 cents for the "blowoff show" where they moved into another small rear tent in which a "real dance" was promised. As Percy said we thought we were going to see "de dance without de pants" as the talker had assured them. Percy recalls that she did a few naughty twists in her dance and sure enough Floyd King had his plagelot player and Arabian with his tom-tom making music but the girl kept on "de pants". He says he was amazed at the spread of canvas this little 10 car show had. They had a good colored sideshow band and he heard at the time it was doubling in the big show but there is no other evidence to support this so it was possibly just a rumor. Talk on the lot was that the band hadn't been paid and walked off. Percy says he recalls they had the bomb type flares (flambos) leading from the lot to the train siding



that night and that as he and his brother left the show they talked about the size and kind of show they'd like to be roustabouts on if they ever went out with a circus. He ended his report by expressing regrets they had not been able to see the regular big show performance.

The so called Oriental or "cooch" dances in the sideshow were a part of both King rail shows and were found in practically every circus of comparable size in those days. The cooch with the added blowoff charge was a part of what was termed the sideshow "grift" in those days and it along with the shell game and three card monte produced considerable revenue, but in practically every locale the grift had to be fixed with the local law enforcement body and in some spots the payoff was substantial, cutting down into the grift take considerably.

Leaving North Dakota Cole Bros. moved into Montana at Scobey on July 7, playing a Sunday date, something impossible to do in many sections of the country in 1929. The show during its many weeks in the west would play almost every Sunday on the calendar. A total of 22 stands were made in Montana with final date coming at Plains on July 28. Next on the route were two stands in Idaho at Sand Point and Cour de Alene and on the last day of July the show was at Tekoa, Washington. Only note of any kind appearing in the *Billboard* in July was in the July 13, 1929 issue which said that Jack Mills and Sol Berry were the bannermen currently with the show.

While Cole Bros. in July was moving through territory never before played by a King owned flat car type railroad show, Gentry Bros. was in familiar lands in New England that King shows had played every season since 1925. On July 2 the show was at Westerly, R.I., the only stand played in that state in 1929. Bette Leonard recorded the show had good business there and that night the Gentry train was passed by one of the Ringling-Barnum sections. She also made the following notes on the five dates in Massachusetts that followed. Taunton, business was very bad, no parade; Hyannis, paraded, big matinee, light night house; Falmouth, very good days business; Norwood, someone stole my umbrella and raincoat here; and Clinton on July 8 was a very hot day, weatherwise. The show then moved into New Hampshire and got fair business at Nashua, returned the following day to Massachusetts at Haverhill for another fair sized take, then for the next week or so moved back and forth between New Hampshire and Maine. Bette's notes told the story, Biddeford, Maine, good matinee, very good night house; Dover, N.H., swell business, no parade; Sanford, Me., lot actually located between Springvale and Sanford;




Photo No. 14 - Sideshow bandwagon (Gollmar diamond carving tableau) on Cole Bros. lot ready for street parade, season of 1929. Joe Bradbury Collection.

North Conway, N.H., very nice business; Bath, Maine, gave parade over cobblestone streets; Rumford, Me., good business, no parade; Farmington, Me., paraded, very good business; Skowhegan, Me., old Indian squaw on show got hit by a horse; South Pass, Me., paraded; Berlin, N.H., business bum; Groveton, N.H., paraded, rained at night, business rotten; Littleton, N.H., lot close into town, business bad; Plymouth, N.H., better business; Laconia, N.H., business fair, lot close into town; Lebanon, N.H., played on July 27, also gave a fair take

This one column newspaper ad was used in 1929. Circus World Museum Collection.

## ASHLAND 21

### FRI. JUNE



# COLE BROS.

## 3 RING CIRCUS

**\$750,000 Invested**

2 AIR TRAINS	2
3 RINGS	3
2 STAGES	2
500 PEOPLE	500
300 HORSES	300
30 AERIALISTS	30
60 ACROBATS	60
30 CLOWNS	30
60 RIDERS	60

**PARADE 11 AM**

**PERFORMANCES 2<sup>ND</sup> & 8 PM**

1929

and was the final stand in New England. The next day the show returned to New York for another tour in the state with initial stand at Rouses Point. Next came Plattsburg and the show was at Fort Henry on July 31, where no parade was given but fair size crowds attended the performances. On August 1 the show played White Hall where business was bum but the next day while on a dusty lot in Saratoga Springs there was a big night house. After the two shows given at North Creek on August 3, Betty and Bobby Zenero left the Gentry circus. She says they were paid in full when they departed.

The *Billboard* had considerable coverage of Gentry Bros. during its tour of June and July 1929 and from reading some of the reports it was obvious things were not going too well. There was a large turnover of personnel and evidence that the show was lowering its nut (daily operating expense). The July 6, 1929 *Billboard* with an article headed, MANY PEOPLE CLOSE WITH GENTRY CIRCUS, said that Sky J. Harris had written to the publication that the following people have closed with the show; Sideshow manager, James Shropshire and wife at White Plains, N.Y., also J.D. Cook and Yellow Burnett of the ticket department; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Poplin of the Wild West Department, left for Oneida, N.Y. to join the State Troopers. Ralph W. Woodward and James M. Cole left at White Plains, N.Y. for their homes and Harris went to Chicago. Al Ben Deb has joined Doc Oyler's sideshow on the 101 Ranch Show. Equestrian director Fred Nelson left for his home and John Griffin is now blowing the whistle.

The July 13, 1929, *Billboard* carried a piece headed, GENTRY BUSINESS IMPROVING, which said that although Gentry Bros. encountered two weeks of poor business in the hard coal region of Pennsylvania, the last two weeks have been most satisfactory and steadily improving each day. At White Plains, N.Y., on the worst lot of the season, the show had a good matinee and packed night house. Fort Chester and South Norwalk gave the show good business, as well as Meriden, Conn., which is a new town

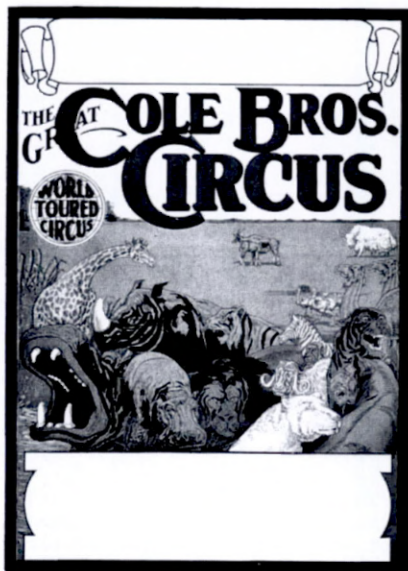


for this show. The management entertained children from the Orphans Home there. Hyannis, Mass., gave the show a nice days business, July 4, and Falmouth was capacity. Another note said the show was billed heavily and has encountered opposition practically all season.

Another Gentry report came in the July 30, 1929 *Billboard* which said that two of the most fashionable and largest audiences of the season were present at Falmouth, Mass., July 5. At White Plains, N.Y., the children of the Orphans Home were entertained by the clowns after the matinee and refreshments served. The Elks entertained 300 children at Danbury, Conn., at the matinee performance. The show has a newly arranged spec (mentioned in the Bette Leonard diary), and Axell Schultz and wife have several good vocal numbers. The Clyde O'Neill Trio, bar act, and Arthur Burson are featured in the big show. The ring stock, in charge of Bill Carpenter (32nd year in the business), and the baggage stock, in charge of Joe Wallace, are in excellent condition. Everett White's colored band has made a decided hit in the East; and renders a real concert each night at 6:45 p.m. and presents the minstrels in the sideshow. Dad Harris is on the front door of the sideshow as usual his 10th year with the King brothers. Frank Sataro is equestrian director, succeeding Fred Nelson. Fred Coleman has the bannerline well filled every day. He also does 24 hour work.

The Aug. 3, 1929 *Billboard* said that seven stands in Maine gave the show satisfactory business. It was the first visit of the show in that state in some years and was welcomed. The Bath Times gave a fine after notice. The Oxford County fairgrounds, located about midway between South Paris and Norway, was used on July 20. Other notes said that Arthur Berry, supt. of props, has built a new "stage"; it being five feet wider than the old one. Campbell and Delbeane are presenting a comedy stilt act that is going over big. The Buckley Brothers are favorites in the East, having been with the Kings for five seasons. Good movements have been given the show by the B&M Grand Trunk, and Maine Central railroads. A new lot was used at Berlin, N.H. and is about half a mile closer in than the old one. Business at Littleton, N.H. was good, although opposition paper was up.

A final report of the show's New England tour came in the Aug. 10, 1929 *Billboard* which said everyone regretted leaving Maine and New Hampshire, as ideal weather and business prevailed at every stand, and very good press notices were given the show. Ray Glaum is displaying new wardrobe in the iron-jaw number, as are Misses Clark, Underhill, and Rojas. Manager Burkhart is doing nice



Front cover of Cole Bros. 24 page courier used in 1929. Art work featuring large group of wild animals is done in multi colors. Identical couriers titled appropriately were used by both Cole Bros. and Gentry Bros. in 1929. Joe Bradbury Collection.

business with the sideshow, which includes Prof. White's Minstrels, band and orchestra (12 people); Mayme Gilmore, snake act; Prof. St. Elmo, musical act; Mrs. Burkhart, mind-reading; Elienta, mid-air illusion; Mr. Burkhart, Punch and Judy and magic; rof. Oscar, tattoo artiste. The electrical department includes Tommy Hughes, chief electrician; Fred Novak, first assistant; Fred Buddington and Morris Spangler, cable men; Arthur McDonald, William Gunderman, and William Kuzenak. Business at Rouses Point and Plattsburg, N.Y. was very satisfactory. Joe English, cornetist with John Griffin's band, also sings several numbers that are scoring. Despite opposition at Plymouth and Laconia, N.H. good business was done. Caroline Derossitt is presenting an iron-jaw wire act with her sister, Mrs. Underhill. The pit show is in charge of William Rawls, making his sixth season. The Misses Buckner, Rojas, Clark, Zenere and Derossitt appear in the ladder number working in colored spotlights.

George Burkhart mentioned in the above article had replaced James Shropshire as sideshow manager when the latter left at White Plains.

It was also reported in the *Billboard* that the Gentry Bros. advance department during July had consisted of Karl Knudson, general agent and railroad contractor; J.C. Admire and H.L. Deane, local contractors; Gene Staats, manager of Advertising Car No. 1 with 22 men; Oscar Hinkley with 3 men on

the advertising truck running between the advance cars appearance and the show date; and F. Spurrier and 5 men on the opposition brigade. Paul Conway headed the press department. It was also mentioned that the show had encountered opposition practically all season long.

The Gentry show during the period of personnel turnover in the summer of 1929 was constantly advertising for people. John Griffin would want a trombone player "at once" on week, and the following week he'd advertise for a cornet player. Prof. White also wanted a cornet player for the sideshow band. When Burkhart took over the sideshow he put out ads wanting sideshow acts and dancers, in fact "plenty of people" to work a long season. The Aug. 31, 1929 *Billboard* reported that L. Brown and his wife, Mickey, had joined Gentry, he working on the sideshow ticket box and she riding menage. Also, it was mentioned that Bill Emery was now on the show in charge of the elephants, replacing Arky Scott.

By mid August it was obvious to all, those on the Gentry show, as well as others in the circus world, that the show was having a rough go of it despite some rather cheery reports that were coming from it to the trade publications. Tradition has long held that the smaller Cole Bros. show, which was rolling along through the West doing pretty good, had to send funds constantly to Gentry Bros. in order to keep it going. Floyd King didn't particularly dwell on this in his interview, but didn't deny it. He repeatedly mentioned the fact that the smaller Cole show with its much lower nut was by far the more profitable of the two circuses during the season. Matters hadn't become desperate on Gentry as yet, but unless it could show a vast improvement, the circus world would not last throughout the season. Opposition from other shows was now Gentry's biggest drawback. The weather was generally good while it had been in New England in contrast to other seasons there; but no reason was shown why the show did not draw consistently, but it didn't. For all the good days there was an equal number of bad ones. Opposition had come so far in the season from the American Circus Corporation units, John Robinson, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sparks, and in New England, Sells-Floto had made a big play. Also in New England the fast growing motorized show, Downie Bros. presented formidable opposition.

Cole Bros. didn't meet nearly as much opposition from other show as did Gentry, but it did cross paths with a number of other circuses. Al G. Barnes, Robbins Bros., plus several motorized shows, all played through



much of the western territory traversed by Cole.

August 1 found Cole Bros. at Colfax, Wash., and after two other dates in the state at Pomeroy and Dayton, the show returned to Idaho for Payette; then made two stands in Oregon at Burns and Vale. On August 8, the show moved back into Idaho at Emmett, and played a total of 10 dates in the state before going south into Utah for 4 stands. A final return to Idaho came at Montpelier on August 24, then the show moved over into Wyoming for Kenmerer, Rawlings, Rock Springs, and Evanston. Taking a westward turn again, Cole returned to Utah to play Park City and a matinee only at Morgan; and proceeding west rapidly crossed Nevada playing Elko, Battle Mountain, and Lovelock; and on September 3 moved into California at Westwood.

Only news of Cole's activities in the *Billboard* came in the Aug. 3, 1929 issue which reported that Earle Axmacher had left Horace Laird's group of clowns to play fair dates. An interesting note said that Jerome T. Harriman, Cole's contracting agent, was making his way by automobile. Last week he crossed the Continental Divide. He was covering about 1,200 miles each week booking the Cole show on its extensive tour of the west.

In the meantime, Gentry Bros. spent the first 9 days of August in New York. The *Billboard* said that the week's business was satisfactory, and that the show had two capacity houses at Kingston, August 6. The show moved into Pennsylvania for a date at Carbon-dale, Aug. 9, then returned to New York for Owego, Corning, and Wellsville. On August 15 the show made one final date in Pennsylvania at Corry, where it was the third circus of the 1929 season in that city so far. Weather was inclement and business only fair.

Gentry next moved westward into Ohio, and on August 16 was at Niles which was followed by Kent, Willard, and Defiance. A return to Indiana came at Kendallville, August 21, and following a total of 8 dates in the state the show moved further westward going into Illinois at Flora. The final day in August found the show at Vandalia, Ill. Four other stands in Illinois followed then Gentry headed into Missouri at Louisiana on Sept. 6 and remained in the state through its Sept. 17 date in Neosha. Fall was now here and the shows tour of the south began at Berryville, Ark., on Sept. 18, with additional dates in the state to come at Harrison, Leslie, Heber Springs, Searcy, Cotton Plant, and Helena. On Sept. 26 the show went into Mississippi at Cleveland, and on the final day of the month was still in the state playing Yazoo City.

The *Billboard* was now about as silent on Gentry activities as it was on

Cole. The Sept. 7, 1929 issue listed the current sideshow lineup headed by G. Burkhart, manager. Attractions were Prof. White's band and minstrels (12 people); Mayme Gilmore, snakes; Prof. Frank, 1 man orchestra and ventriloquist; Mrs. Burkhart, second sight; G. Burkhart, levitation and coins; Cubonola Algenian, fire eater; Leon Deominick, Turkish sword fighter and gun spinner; Jack Kuhn, tattoo artist; Prof. Hardy, magic and Punch; St. Leon, accordionist; Chief Red Cloud and Indian village; Joe Martin, big baboon; Jim Atlen, Mile Pad-dula, and four dancers.

The Sept. 21, 1929 *Billboard* reported that much favorable comment has been heard at every stand on the fine condition of the Gentry Bros. draft and ring stock. Major Broland with his educated dog, Jack, are new features of the aftershow, much to the kiddies delight. A new clown number, The Gallant Fire Brigade, has been placed in the program.

Cole Bros. played Susanville, Calif. on September 4, moved into Oregon at Lake View the next day, then returned to California for Altruas. Cole went back into Nevada to play Fallon, Carson City, and Reno; then made one final swing thru California picking up dates at Auburn, Madera, Hanford, Barstow, and Needles. On September 15 the show started eastward into Arizona at Kingman which was followed by stands in Williams, Clarksdale, Flagstaff, and Holbrook. Continuing eastward the show entered New Mexico at Gallup on September 21 and crossed the state in two more stands,

Rear cover of Cole Bros. 24 page courier used in 1929 advertised the Grand Free Street Parade and was printed in multi colors.



Ft. Sumner and Clovis. September 25 saw Cole at Canadian, Texas and after playing Perryton the following day, went into Oklahoma at Shattuck. Wynoka came next, and after a Sunday run, the show moved into Kansas for a single date in that state at Anthony on September 30.

The Sept. 28, 1929 *Billboard* carried the only mention of Cole during the month of September. The article said that Ted Engler, the Indiana boy-giant who had been with the show earlier in the season, had called on the *Billboard* offices in Cincinnati. It also said that Cole Bros. would winter some place in the southwest, according to word received by the publication, in order to make the West Coast early next season. A final note said that 1929 had not been such a good season for either Cole or Gentry.

How true were these words. Little did the circus world realize that Gentry Bros. was now in its final few weeks of operation. October 1 saw the show in Mississippi at Canton with an extended run of dates to follow. The show remained in the state for half of the month with the final stand at Boonville on October 15, then moved into Tennessee the next day at Trenton. Had the sudden events which closed the show a few days later not occurred, the route was planned to take it back to Mississippi. A report in the Oct. 19, 1929 *Billboard* quoted on Ernest Shaw who said that the cotton crop and general conditions in Mississippi were good and that Gentry Bros. had booked New Albany for November 1. Unfortunately the show never kept that date. Continuing in Tennessee, the show played Union City, Huntington, Lexington, and Murray, and on October 22 was at Paris.

Here in Paris, Tenn., on Oct. 22, 1929, Gentry Bros. funds were exhausted. The Cole show had sent what monies it could during the season to keep the larger circus going, but now it could do so no longer. According to Floyd King, the Gentry demise came when the show simply didn't have the money to pay the railroad for the move to the next stand. He said that actually their only large creditor was the Donaldson Lithograph Co. of Cincinnati to whom they did owe a considerable amount. The personnel had been paid regularly. The performance nut had been lowered during the season and other expenses reduced to a minimum. Arthur Burson, aerialist and foot slide artist, had been injured back on August 16 in Niles, Ohio and hospitalized for several weeks, the Zeneros had left a couple weeks earlier. These, plus the numerous other departures of performers mentioned earlier, had lowered expenses, but still the show couldn't make it through the season. Gentry has often been classed as the first casualty of the great depression,



but actually it folded a few days before the stock market crash.

The Nov. 2, 1929 *Billboard* told the story of the Gentry folding as follows:

"The Gentry Bros. Circus closed at Paris, Tenn. Oct. 23, on account of bad business and inclement weather. Howard King made every effort to keep the show going, but was unable, it is said, to meet transportation costs out of Paris.

"The troubles of the Gentry Show started last fall in a very disastrous tour through the Carolinas, where the show lost heavily, and after wintering in Dayton, O., took the road, severely handicapped it is said, by lack of operating capital.

"The show experienced bad weather and unfavorable conditions in its tour through the New England states, and was finally closed at Paris.

"The stock and animals have been moved to the fairgrounds at Paris, Walter Harvey being appointed receiver, with Lewis & Rose, attorneys. The court has authorized the receiver to sell this property to the highest bidder, subject to the court's approval.

"The receiver reports that all stock, animals, and equipment are in excellent condition."

Since there was absolutely no hope of the Kings raising funds to save the show, the principal creditor, Donaldson Lithographing Co., moved rapidly into court to get their man, Walter Harvey, appointed as receiver. The Warren Tank Car Co. still held a mortgage on the 4 stock cars, but if any funds were still owed to Ellis Joseph for animals or to Driver Bros. for the canvas, no mention was made of it. How payments for the new tentage Gentry took delivery of in June were handled is not known to the author.

The following advertisement ran in the Nov. 2, 1929 *Billboard*.

"For Sale, Gentry Bros. Circus (including title). In pursuance to order of the Court of Henry County, Paris, Tenn., the following property is offered for sale as a whole or in part as may be considered by Court as best for the creditors in lieu of claims against which said property is held for sale.

"The Gentry Bros. Circus in its entirety, consisting of three performing elephants, six cages of wild animals, 48 head of draft stock, together with harness for same, 13 head of menage and high-school horses, 13 ponies, all trained, harness for same; all wardrobe, tableaux wagons, baggage wagons, tents, stakes, electric light plant and necessary equipment for its operation, cookhouse equipment, seats, six steel 70 ft. flat cars, three sleepers, and one private car, together with bedding, linen and other necessary equipment; one steam calliope, one air calliope, twenty-seven baggage wagons and all other


property used and necessary to operated and conduct a circus, one advertising car fully equipped and all other miscellaneous property owned and used this season by said Gentry Bros. Circus.

"A complete circus ready to operate. Canvas in excellent condition. All stock in excellent condition and equipment considered first class.

"This property to be sold at once and bids can be made to the Receiver, Walter Harvey, Hotel Greystone, Paris, Tenn. by mail or parties interested can see property stored on Fairgrounds, Paris, Tenn. Immediate sale by order of court."

A detailed property inventory was also prepared and thanks to the Pfening collection we have it reproduced in its entirety here. This document gives us a full and complete look at the Gentry Bros. 15 car show during its final season of 1929.

Permanent Address  
**BILLBOARD**  
CINCINNATI  
OHIO



**41st Annual Tour**

**OFFICIAL ROUTE No. 7**  
1929

ALLOW MAIL ENOUGH TIME TO REACH POINTS NAMED BEFORE DATE GIVEN

DATE	TOWN	STATE	RAILROAD	MILES
SUNDAY				
JUNE 10	WAVERLY	N. Y.	L. V.	96
" 11	NORWICH	N. Y.	D. L. & W.	82
" 12	CORTLAND	N. Y.	D. L. & W.	63
" 13	OSWEGO	N. Y.	D. L. & W.	72
" 14	NEWARK	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	87
" 15	SENECA FALLS	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	30
SUNDAY				
" 17	ONEIDA	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	48
" 18	ROME	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	13
" 19	PORT PLAIN	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	50
" 20	COHOES	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	62
" 21	HUDSON	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	40
" 22	PEERSKILL	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	73
SUNDAY				
" 24	WHITE PLAINS	N. Y.	N. Y. C.	53
				Total mileage to date 2811

Issued by John Griffin

Among showmen attending the sale were George W. Christy, Bert Rutherford, Sam B. Dill, A.C. Bradley, Frank Gentry, and Fred Coleman. As expected Donaldson Lithographing Co. submitted the highest bid and was awarded the property. The Nov. 23, 1929 *Billboard* told the story of the sale with headlines, "Donaldsons Get Gentry Circus. Show shipped to West Baden, Ind. Where it Will be Disposed Of." Paris, Tenn. Nov. 18 — The Gentry Bros. Circus, which has been in the hands of Receiver Walter Harvey, was sold by order of the Chancery Court and bid in by the Donaldson Lithographing Co. of Newport, Ky. for \$10,000. The sale was confirmed Saturday. The show was first sold in lots and the combined bids were only \$4,720. The property was then bid in by the Donaldson Company to protect a mortgage of about \$14,000. The show, with exception of four steel cars, the property of the Warren Tank Car Company, was loaded today and shipped to West Baden, Ind. where it will arrive

tomorrow evening or Wednesday morning. It will be disposed of at once as a whole or in part.

Again, thanks to the Pfening collection we have a copy of the official Louisville and Nashville Railroad Co.'s train movement order for shipping the Gentry train from Paris, Tenn. to Evansville, Ind. for part of the run to the old Edward Ballard quarters in West Baden, Indiana. The movement order is printed here as a supplement.

It is interesting to note that all of the cars, including the stock cars for which the Warren Tank Car Co. held a mortgage were in the train going to West Baden. Evidently Warren felt it best they be moved in this fashion. It is assumed all of them eventually reached the Warren plant in Warren, Pa. For sure the elephant car did which is pictured in photo No. 11 after it reached the Warren plant and was stored on a siding.

On October 1, Cole Bros. had gone into Oklahoma for a date at Watonga which was followed by 13 more in the state. On October 15 the show played Hugo, which years later would become an important circus winterquarters site. The final stand in Oklahoma came the next day at Idabell, then the show went into Arkansas for stands at Ashdown, DeQueen, Mena, and Waldron. Cole returned to Oklahoma on October 22 and was at Sallisaw on the day Gentry Bros. was closing in Paris, Tenn. After Poteau the show moved back into Arkansas at Fayetteville, and on Friday, October 25, the date to be forever remembered as Black Friday, the day of the Great Stock Market Crash in New York City, was in Rogers. A final tour of Oklahoma began the next day at Vinita and after stands at Claremore, Nowata, Wagoner, and Eufaula, went south into Texas on November 1 at Denton.

Continuing in the Lone Star State the show played Waxahachie, Mexia, Hillsboro, Cleburne, Weatherford, and McGregor, and at Brenham, on November 9, the 1929 season came to a close.

Floyd King in his interview tells the story of how business for Cole Bros. nose dived so drastically following the stock market crash as follows:

"In 1929 the 10 car Cole Bros. Circus cost \$1,500 per day to operate. We were running along getting about an average of \$2,200 a day. In the latter part of October we were in Arkansas when the stock market crash hit—that is the Black Day hit, which I believe was October 25. Almost overnight our business dropped from \$2,200 a day average down to \$1,700 a day. A few days later down to \$1,000 a day and finally down to four, five, or six hundred dollars a day."

Despite the sudden drop in revenue it appears Cole Bros. may have played out its regular scheduled route



because there was a notation in the Nov. 23, 1929 *Billboard* which said that Jerome T. Harriman, contracting agent, had closed his season near San Antonio, Texas back on October 25. Possibly a few stands were blown but if so King didn't mention it. The article also said that Harriman, after the show had opened in Princeton, Ky., had travelled via auto the entire season, covering 29 states and nearly 50,000 miles. The same *Billboard* issue told of the Cole closing, saying the season had ended at Brenham, Texas on November 9, and also said that the show was not in the hands of a receiver as earlier reported. Manager Floyd King was now in the North to get funds to continue the operation of the show.

At this point in time the King brothers then separated their partnership. Howard was out of it entirely and Floyd on his own spent the remaining weeks of 1929 in an attempt to salvage the 10 car show so it could go out in 1930. The economic experts could not agree as yet on the effects of the stock market crash. For sure a depression had set in but none were of the opinion it would be of long duration. Possibly a year, maybe two, but none envisioned that the downward trend would continue steadily until rock bottom was hit in July 1932. Most circuses had experienced a tremendous 1929 season, and as mentioned earlier only Buck Jones Wild West, Gentry Bros., and Silvan-Drew which also folded about the same time as Gentry, would be washed up for good.

What arrangements Andrew Donaldson made with Ed Ballard for use of the old circus quarters at West Baden, Ind. are not known to the author. Ballard of course was one of the trio, along with Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers, who had owned the American Circus Corporation which in 1929 had put five circuses on the road, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, and Sparks. On September 5, 1929 the ACC had sold all of their shows plus the large Peru, Indiana quarters to John Ringling. Ballard owned the West Baden quarters personally and his home was located on the property. One of the American Circus Corporation units had wintered in West Baden for a number of years but at the conclusion of the 1928 season John Robinson which had gone out from there in the spring went into Peru quarters along with Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells-Floto. Thus the West Baden quarters were vacant and the Gentry property now owned by Donaldson could easily be housed there. Shortly after the Gentry property arrived in West Baden Donaldson made arrangements to let Sam B. Dill use the Gentry title for a motorized show which he would organize there in the West Baden



Cole Bros. 1929 letterhead was an Erie design that was used on the J.A. Jones Cole show in 1916 and the Elmer H. Jones 2 car show in the early 20's. Color scheme had title in white on red with center design in red and green. Animal heads and winged creatures and general background is done in gold. Fred Pfening Jr. Collection.

quarters and go out in the spring of 1930.

Donaldson was able to dispose of most of the Gentry physical property in December. The Dec. 21, 1929 *Billboard* said that Andrew Downie had bought considerable Gentry equipment for his motorized Downie Bros. Circus. He purchased the air calliope, light plant, canvas consisting of the big top, sideshow, dressing room, cookhouse, menagerie, horse tops and marquee. Also Downie purchased 2 camels, 1 llama, a tiger, 2 lions, 1 polar bear, 1 brown bear, 1 emu, 1 panther, 1 cage of monkeys, a large baboon, and 3 head of menage stock. It was mentioned that the cages were to be mounted on truck chassis and used in the Downie parade.

Further information on the sale of the Gentry property came in the Dec. 28, 1929 *Billboard* which said that 3 elephants, some horses, wagons and

other equipment had gone to the Otis L. Smith Railroad Carnival, other baggage horses had been shipped to the Cincinnati market and another note said a Chicago dealer had purchased them, and it was noted that Andrew Downie had purchased some of the wardrobe, all of the canvas, and some animals. Rest of the wardrobe, some ring stock, and other equipment were sold to Sam B. Dill. Fred Buchanan, owner of Robbins Bros. Circus purchased several wagons. The article concluded that all of the heavy baggage wagons, pole wagons, and some cages and dens are stored at West Baden and will be disposed of.

It is well documented that Fred Buchanan got the Russia Bandwagon and used it in the street parade of his Robbins Bros. Circus in 1930. No details are known on any other wagons Buchanan may have gotten. For sure no parade type vehicles were involved but possibly he picked up one or more baggage wagons.

All of the rail cars supposedly went to the Warren Tank Car Company. What disposition Warren made with them is not known to the author.

It has never been determined just exactly what the Otis J. Smith Carnival got from the Gentry plunder. Letters I sent to members of that family years ago in an attempt to get a detailed listing were never answered. The late Bill Woodcock Sr. and I discussed this many times. My files contain this interesting bit of info from him on the matter.

"In 1930 when I was with Sells-Floto we played Utica, N.Y. After the bulls were loaded we walked a short distance to the lot of the Otis L. Smith carnival. The show had an animal show or menagerie. Several wagon cages in latter, but not the Gentry stuff. Instead they were small cages with buggy wheels built by Smith himself. I was informed by elephant man, Joe Secastin that they kept the three former Gentry bulls, Mom, Danny and Eva in this menagerie, but worked Danny and Eva in a roped off area as a free act. For some time thereafter, these two bulls were presented by

Permanent Address  
BILLBOARD  
CINCINNATI  
OHIO

THE GREAT  
**COLE BROS.**  
WORLD-TOURED  
**CIRCUS**

42nd  
Annual  
Tour

OFFICIAL ROUTE  
1929

Route Card No. 2

ALLOW MAIL ENOUGH TIME TO REACH POINTS NAMED BEFORE DATE GIVEN

DATE	TOWN	STATE	RAILROAD	MILES
Apr. 22	Mt. Vernon,	Ind.	L. & N.	71
Apr. 23	Princeton,	Ind.	C. & E. I.	46
Apr. 24	Huntingburg,	Ind.	Southern	38
Apr. 25	Mt. Carmel,	Ill.	Southern	50
Apr. 26	Harrisburg,	Ill.	Big Four	65
Apr. 27	Carmi,	Ill.	Big Four	43
SUNDAY				
Apr. 29	Mt. Vernon,	Ill.	L. & N.	48
Apr. 30	Benton,	Ill.	C. & E. I.	23
May 1	Herrin,	Ill.	I. C.	20
May 2	Murphysboro,	Ill.	I. C.	11
May 3	Bellville,	Ill.	I. C.	10
May 4	Stanton,	Ill.	Southern & Wabash	51
SUNDAY				
May 6	Granite City,	Ill.	Wabash	51
Total Mileage				1250





Photo No. 15 - Gollmar 4 Mirror Bandwagon on Cole Bros. lot, season of 1929. This wagon carried the No. 1 band in the street parade. Joe Bradbury Collection.

Maybelle Smith, Otis his daughter. Setting outside someplace around the lot, I noted an old Ringling tab den that had come from Gentry—well, I can't say which one, but probably the one with the carved wolf and birds. It was painted blue with silver carvings. It is known that Smith got some of the Gentry stuff, but just what, aside from the above described wagon and three bulls, I don't know. Utica, where I saw this, was the home of the Smith shows. Later two elephants, Danny and Eva, were sold by Smith to Bill Ketrow and for a time were presented on his Kay Bros. Circus by Mary Ellen Ketrow. Later the elephant went to Ray Rogers for his Wallace Bros. and Barnett Bros. circuses."

Art "Doc" Miller recently wrote me (1978) that he understood the Otis L. Smith shows also got a few of the Gentry baggage wagons and says he talked once with Smith's Jenny foreman who mentioned these to him. The foreman told him that the Gentry wagons instead of being better than the Smith "clinkers" (pretty awful, all widths, and damndest things to load as had to keep shirting the loading runs back and forth for the wagon widths) were equally as bad, tires very thin, and wheels dangerously weak.

The Otis L. Smith Shows was an early depression casualty and folded in 1931. Doc Miller says he finally was able to track down the demise of the show. It had suffered a "Hey Rube" (fight between locals and show personnel) in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. a week before its final stand in Bloomsburg, Pa. After the bust the property was stored at the Bloomsburg fairgrounds. During the following winter some of the equipment was sold off piecemeal and Maybelle Smith played various dates with the Gentry elephants. When it became time to fix up the fairgrounds for the fair the next season the Smith wagons were dragged out of town and parked along the highway

right of way. From there they just rotted away or were stolen, but could not have been of much value to any farmer and too far gone to use on a show. Doc Miller presumes they just fell apart and someone collected the iron.

An item in the 1930 *Billboard* about the Otis L. Smith shows said the carnival had purchased 12 draft horses, 3 elephants, "some tableau wagons" and other equipment from Gentry Bros. If the show got more than the Wolf and Birds tableau we have no further evidence of which ones they were.

In early 1930 Donaldson placed an ad in *The Billboard* which read, "For Sale, circus wagons and cages, or running gears for same. Water, dog, property, baggage, calliope, pole, plank, stringer, cook, 2 tableaux, stake and chain, ticket, jack, 2 cage wagons. Also 2 sets of steel runs, formerly Gentry Bros. Show property. Practically at your own price. Ralph Woodward, General Delivery, West Baden, Ind."

Also in early 1930 Andrew Donaldson donated the old John Robinson Steam Calliope which had made the final 1929 season with Gentry Bros. to the Ford-Edison Museum in Dearborn, Mich. and it was shipped there shortly thereafter.

The last mention of any of the Gentry wagons at West Baden came in form of an advertisement in the March 15, 1930 *Billboard* which read, "For Sale. 18 baggage wagons".

The disposition of the Gentry Bros. wagons other than those documented here has long been one of the mysteries confronting wagon historians. The great depression which hit the nation in a major disaster in 1930 killed any reasonable chances for sale of the wagons to other circuses or carnivals. Even though the ads were offering them "practically at your own prices" there were no takers, or at least we know of none.

The only photos to turn up picturing the Gentry wagons in West Baden are printed here, one showing the Large Oval Tableau, Ringling No. 4, and the Winged Dragon (or Lion), Ringling No. 37. Assuming that the Wolf and Birds, Ringling No. 51 went to the Otis L.



Photo No. 16 - Clown bandwagon, drop frame tableau, on Cole Bros. lot, season of 1929. The two men in front are unidentified. Joe Bradbury Collection.

Smith Carnival, that still leaves totally unaccounted for, the Small Oval Tableau, Ringling No. 49, the Sparks Two Statue Tableau, (sideshow bandwagon), and Gollmar Heavy Skyboard Tableau. Actually we cannot fully account for the Gollmar air calliope wagon. It is not known whether or not Downie got the wagon as well as the instrument or not. If so, it must have been junked as it was not used by Downie Bros.

The Russia tableau was on the Robbins Bros. Circus owned by Fred Buchanan through its final season of 1931, and in the fall of 1934-35 went to Adkins and Terrell's new Cole Bros. Circus but was never used by that show and was stored at the old Rochester, Ind. quarters even after the show established quarters in Louisville in the winter of 1940-41. The wagon was not destroyed in the 1940 fire in Rochester. Supposedly it was finally dismantled and some of the carvings used on a bandwagon built for the Starbuck, Minn. local band.

The John Robinson steam calliope has had a good home at the Ford-Edison Museum in Dearborn ever since and remains there to this day. (1978)

After years of being "lost" a curious thing happened in 1941. Carvings from the Wolf and Birds Tableau, Ringling No. 51 turned up on a set of pony size parade wagons built for the V & H Circus at the Harrison, Ohio fairgrounds. The bird carving was on a chariot type bandwagon, the wolf on a small tableau. Where the carvings came from I have never been able to find out. By some unknown route they probably came from the Otis L. Smith plunder in Bloomsburg, Pa. The V & H Circus lasted but a single day and the late Terrell Jacobs later got the wagons and moved them to his quarters in Peru, Ind. After a number of years the tableau with the wolf carving got to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo where it remains



to this day. The chariot type bandwagon with the bird carving was used in the King Bros. Circus parades from 1952-56. Since then it has wandered about and was reported to be at the Shelburne, Vt. museum a few years ago.

The advertisement for sale of Gentry wagons in early 1930 mentioned earlier is of prime interest to historians in two particular instances. First, note it mentions only two tableaux wagons. This could mean that the rest of the tableaux wagons were disposed of and the two here could be the Large Oval Tableau, Ringling No. 4 and the Winged Dragon (or Lion), Ringling No. 37 which ended up in the West Baden wagon graveyard and shown in photos Nos. 17 & 18. The remainder of the tableaux most probably went to the Otis L. Smith Shows or to some unknown source. Also the mention of two cage wagons in the ad tells us that Andrew Downie didn't get all of the cages. What finally happened to these two cages is not known to the author. A cage wagon which was at the Washington Park Zoo in Michigan City, Ind. at least as late as 1950—when I saw it—has been said by some to have been of Gentry Bros. origin. Absence of photos of all of the Gentry cages make it impossible to tell.

Epilog. This series on the Floyd and Howard King Railroad Circuses 1925-30 will conclude in one more installment, tentatively scheduled for the Jan.-Feb. 1969 issue. We would like to make one more appeal to our readers to check their collections and if they have any photos of the King rail shows, especially the 15 car circus, which have not been printed so far to please loan them so they can appear in this final installment. Also we would like for anyone who might have any further information on the remainder of the Gentry wagons at the West Baden quarters to contact the author or editor of the *Bandwagon*.

## Supplement I

Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company  
General Freight Office  
Louisville, Ky. November 14, 1929  
File 97-14

Billing Order No. A-10719  
(Cancels Billing Order No. A-10691)  
To Agents:

GENTRY BROS. CIRCUS

You are authorized to bill from points shown below the above Circus composed of 6 flat cars, 4 stock cars and 5 coaches, total 15 cars, all to be furnished by the Circus Company with not to exceed 200 persons who will travel with the Circus. All in excess of 200 persons to pay regular passenger fare.

When cars used by the Circus Company occupy the Railroad Company's tracks at any point for a longer period than forty-eight (48) hours a track rental charge will be assessed at the rate of one dollar (\$1.00) per car per day or fraction thereof on all cars remaining at an exhibition point longer than forty-eight (48) hours following the first seven

(7) A.M. after arrival, Sunday excluded. When rental charges accrue no further movement should be made until such charges are paid. Rental charges thus accruing should be reported to the Auditor of Station Accounts and not to the Manager of the Demurrage Bureau. No mileage as per diem will be allowed on these cars.

The movement to be made as follows:

1. To leave Paris, Tenn. about noon, Saturday, November 16th, and run to Evansville, Ind. and deliver loaded to connection with the C&EI Railway.

For this service the Railroad Company will charge the following amounts, payment to be made to the Agent of the Railroad Company at points shown below, before movement during regular week day working hours.

To the Agent at Paris, Tenn. .... \$1,197.75

The above charge includes transportation of not exceeding 200 persons. This billing order expires with movement.

Please be governed accordingly.

Issued by  
C.D. Quinn, General Freight Agent  
Louisville, Ky.

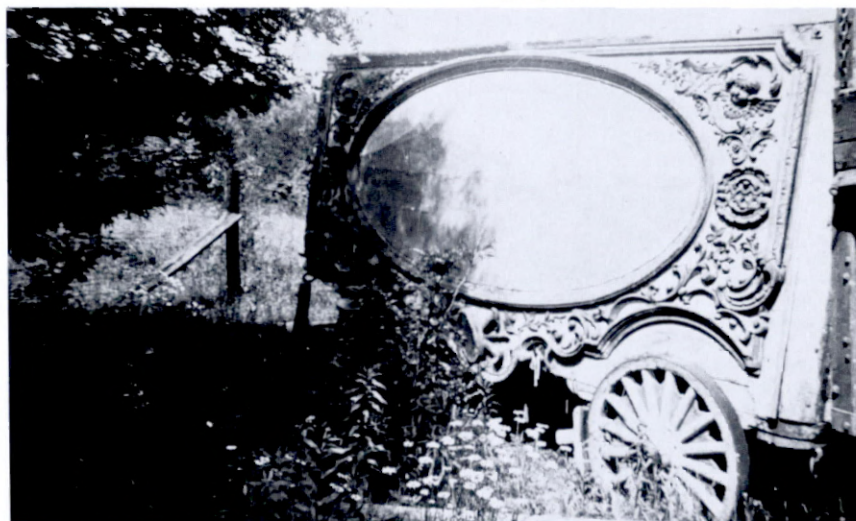


Photo No. 17 - Large Oval Tableau (Ringling No. 4) in graveyard of Gentry Bros. wagons at the West Baden, Ind. quarters about 1933. Fred Pfening Jr. Collection.

## Supplement II

### INVENTORY LIST GENTRY BROTHERS CIRCUS

The following is an inventory of the properties, equipment and effects used by and in the operation and conduction of the GENTRY BROTHERS CIRCUS, and all properties and equipment is in first class servicable condition.

#### BAGGAGE WAGONS -

- Electric Light Wagon
- Plank Wagon
- Plank Wagon
- Cookhouse Wagon
- Stable Wagon
- Big Top Canvas Wagon
- Stringer Wagon
- Jack Wagon
- Pole Wagon
- Stake and Chain Wagon
- Wardrobe Wagon

#### PARADE AND TABLEUX WAGONS

- Side Show Band Wagon (with carvings)
- Big Show No. 1 Band Wagon (with carvings)
- Big Show Band No. 2 Wagon (with carvings)
- Tableaux Parade Wagon

- Air Calliope (with carvings)
- Steam Calliope (with carvings)
- Ticket Wagon
- Police Patrol

#### Two Pony Floats

#### CAGES AND DENS

- Blue Cage No. 56
- Red Cage No. 26
- Yellow Den No. 16
- Clown Band Wagon (open bear cage No. 14)
- Cross Cage No. 10
- Cross Cage No. 20

#### ELECTRIC LIGHT PLANT EQUIPMENT

- 1 Buffalo Motor 25 KW Mounted in Wagon
- 300 feet Dorocord Wire "AA"
- 110 Feet Rubo 1-0 Wire. Cable on all 4 spools
- 115 Feet Rubo 1-0 Wire
- 5 Chandalliers complete with blocks and falls
- 4 Carbide Lights No. 60

Miscellaneous electrical equipment used in the operation of this department and complete lighting equipment for entire show and midway.

#### CANVAS

- 1 Big Top, 100 feet with 3 40 feet middle pieces.

Complete with stakes, center poles, quarter poles, side poles, bale rings, main guy ropes and all necessary equipment to erect this size canvas. New in June.

- 1 Menagerie Top, 60 feet with 3 30 feet middle pieces. Complete with all poles, ropes, stakes, main guy ropes. New in June.
- 1 Side Show Top, 60 feet with 3 30 feet middle pieces. Complete with stakes, poles, main guy ropes. New in June.
- 1 Dressing Room Top, 90 x 40 Push Pole. Complete. New in June.
- 1 Pit Show Top 30 x 40 complete with three banners 6 x 4.
- 1 Candy Stand Top 10 x 10.
- 1 Candy Stand Top 10 x 12.
- 1 Cookhouse Top. Push Pole, complete 40 x 60. New in June.
- 1 Horse Top 30 x 30.
- 1 Horse Top 30 x 30.
- 1 7 x 7 Top, Private Dressing Room.
- 3 Toilet Tops
- 1 Procenium for Side Show, Red and White 60 feet wide.
- 1 Front Door Marquee for Big Show. New in June.
- 1 Side Show front door marquee.
- 1 Back Door Curtain.
- 14 Side Show Banners, Complete with poles, blocks and ropes.
- 1 Wardrobe Top complete. New in May.

#### ANIMALS -

- 3 Performing Elephants (one of the best elephant acts in the country) Mom (female), Danny





Photo No. 18 - Winged Dragon (or Lion) tableau (Ringling No. 37) in graveyard of Gentry Bros. wagons at West Baden, Ind. quarters about 1933. Fred Pfening Jr. Collection.



Gollmar Heavy Carved Skyboard tableau was used on the King brothers 15 car show in seasons 1926-29. This photo was taken about 1928 on Gentry Bros. Pfening Collection.

(male), Eva (female). Can be worked by anybody.

- 1 Polar Bear
- 1 Bengal Tiger (female)
- 1 White Llama.
- 1 Black Bear (male)
- 1 Black Panther.
- 1 Hyena (male)
- 1 Euma
- 1 Sloth Bear
- 1 Lioness
- 1 Lion (male)
- 4 Camels
- 1 Cage of assorted species of monkeys.

#### SEATS -

- 20 Lengths, ten high star back reserve seats with stringers, jacks, ready to set up.
- 20 Lengths ten high circus blue seats with stringers, jacks, ready to erect.
- Seat curtains, netting and miscellaneous equipment used in erections and maintenance of circus seating equipment.

#### BAGGAGE STOCK -

- 48 head of the finest, best kept circus baggage horses together with harness, parade trappings and horse top equipment. This stock is guaranteed in excellent condition. Ages ranging from 5 to 7 years. Health excellent.

#### BLACKSMITH SHOP

Complete equipment for operating circus blacksmith shop, portable forge, anvil, hammers, pinchers, files, draw knives, etc.

#### HARNESS REPAIR DEPARTMENT -

Everything necessary to operation of harness repair department.

#### RAILROAD EQUIPMENT -

- 1 One Private Car with observation end, state rooms and berth arrangements, bath, formerly private car of Charles Ringling. Complete with bedding and linen.
- 1 Berth Car will sleep seventy-two people. Complete with linen and bedding. Steel platforms.
- 1 Combination sleeper and privilege car. Ready to operate. Berth end, will sleep fifty people.
- 1 Workmen's sleeper. Complete.  
(All sleeping cars have electric lighting equipment and three Delco light plants are installed in cars and in working condition.)
- 6 Steel flat cars 70 feet long. Built by Warren Tank Car Co. and in perfect condition.
- 1 Advertising Car, fully equipped together with supply of paper, newspaper cuts, car manager's office equipment, cooking utensils, paste mak-

ing room with boiler. Car equipped with bedding and linen and miscellaneous properties used in the conduction of this department's affairs.

4 72 feet steel stock cars, built by Warren Tank Car Company. Perfect condition and new in spring of 1928.

Chalks, bars, two sets of steel loading runs and other equipment used and necessary to the loading and movement of a complete circus.

#### WARDROBE -

A complete assortment of wardrobe necessary and used in making street parades and "spec" wardrobe used in the presentation of the "spec", all in first class condition and made of velvet, plush, silks, satins, and assortments of materials of the flashiest designs. Russel Uniform Co. and signs and workmanship perfect. Elephant blankets with jewels and stones, spangles, gold and silver braidings and decorations together with horse blankets, trappings and other elaborate designs and trappings used and new this season in the presentation of the spec and street parade. Trunks and wardrobe wagon built for the convenience of this department, together with sewing machines, and other repair equipment. Drivers uniforms, band uniforms for thirty-two men, including three separate sets for big show band. Howdah covers, camels blankets, plumes, pony trappings and other necessary wardrobe for presenting a circus, 24 wardrobe trunks and brass drum boxes.

#### PROPERTIES -

- 2 42 feet sectional wooden ring curbs together with cable and blocks for same.
- 1 38 foot stage with ground cloth, jacks, and other equipment.

A miscellaneous lot of buckets, tubs and property department equipment, grub hoes, sledge hammers, etc.

#### FRONT DOOR AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT

- 1 Ticket Wagon
- 3 Front door chairs
- 1 Front Door Table with jack.
- 1 Front Door Trunk with tickets.
- 1 Burroughs Adding Machine.
- 1 Underwood Typewriter.
- 6 National Cash Registers.
- 2 Iron Express Safes.

Complete ticket rack with tickets. Miscellaneous lot of office equipment and tickets, files, stationary and general office supplies used in the circus ticket wagon.

#### COOKHOUSE -

Complete cooking equipment, dishes, knives, forks, spoons, tables, jacks, pots, pans, kettles, kitchen equipment and dining room equipment, ready to set up and operate. Many items too numerous to mention, but in general complete circus cookhouse and kitchen equipment.

#### SIDE SHOW AND PIT SHOW EQUIPMENT

- 14 Side Show Banners
- 14 Side Show Stages (Platforms)
- 1 Bally Platform
- 2 Side Show Ticket Boxes
- 2 Umbrellas for ticket boxes.
- 2 Side Show front door chairs.
- 1 Pit Show ticket box.
- 1 Pit Show Ticket box umbrella.

#### CANDY STANDS -

Complete candy stand equipment, tables, jacks, trays, candy butchers uniforms, coats, juice cans, baskets, etc.

#### HARNESS AND BLANKETS -

- 1 8-Horse Set (complete)
- 3 6-Horse Set (complete)
- 4 4-Horse Set (complete)
- 2 Train Team Sets complete
- 1 Two Horse set (extra)
- 52 Horse Collars
- 70 Halters
- 9 Sets of Hobbles
- 13 Horse Blankets (white)
- 7 Horse Blankets (tan)
- 14 Saddle Blankets
- 24 Pony Plumes.

#### PONY HARNESS AND RING STOCK EQUIPMENT -

- 1 6 Pony set harness
- 6 2 Pony sets harness
- 60 Pony Halters
- 14 Flat Saddles
- 14 Riding Bridles
- Curry combs, brushes, brooms, tarapaulins, pitch forks and miscellaneous lot of stable equipment.

#### RING STOCK -

- 6 High School and Dancing Horses
- 7 Menage Horses
- 13 Shetland Ponies, performing and working stock.
- 2 Mules, performers and workers.
- 3 extra saddle horses.

THIS PROPERTY IS COMPLETE, all in excellent condition, and ready to reload and move. Stock in excellent condition, wagon equipment in good condition, canvas new in June and all properties are the best that money can buy. COMPLETE CIRCUS from MIDWAY TO BACK DOOR.

The property listed herein is to be sold to the highest bidder on or before November 9th, 1929, in compliance with the order of the Master and Judge of Chancery Court, Henry County, Paris, Tennessee, and all bids must be made to:

WALTER S. HARVEY,  
RECEIVER GENTRY BROTHERS CIRCUS,  
HOTEL GREYSTONE,  
PARIS, TENN.



# A CHECKLIST OF CIRCUS BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED BY JOHN B. RICKETTS

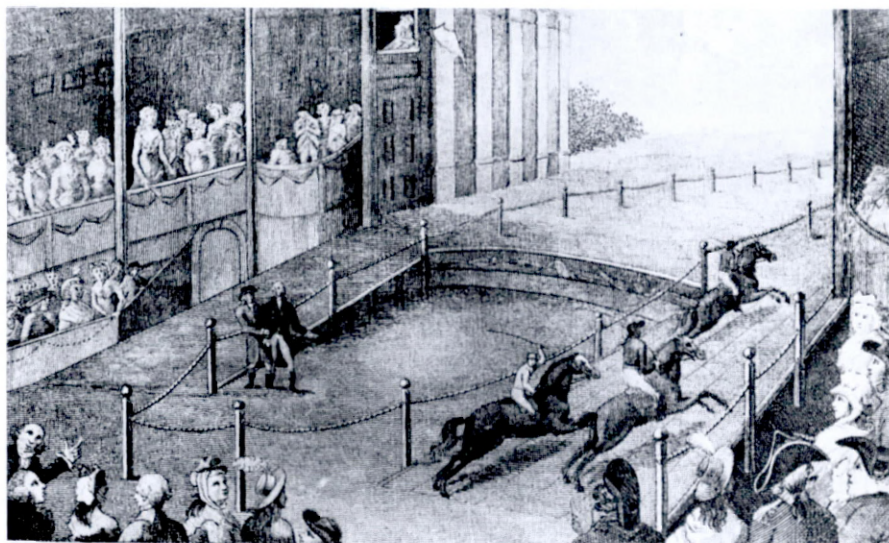
By Dr. James S. Moy

John B. Ricketts is generally regarded as America's first important circus manager. An established equestrian star with the London circuses of Charles Hughes and the Joneses, he opened a riding school shortly after his arrival in Philadelphia in 1792. In April of 1793, he began his American performance career by presenting solo equestrian acts with brief interludes of dancing, tumbling and juggling. As his circus prospered, he added personnel and expanded the range of his acts. In 1794, he added stage entertainments. By 1796, such stage entertainments as pantomimes and dance acts comprised one-half of the daily bill. While his circus productions competed favorably with the established theatres of the day, Ricketts was compelled by the limited audience market to tour extensively. Accordingly, by the end of his American career in 1800, his company had performed in every major eastern American city. For this reason his circus is usually considered a precursor to the great touring circuses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike most subsequent circuses, however, Ricketts built specialized circus buildings to house his unique entertainments. Depending upon his performance goals, Ricketts' structures ranged from simple open air circus arenas to elaborate multi-purpose buildings which could house both circus entertainments while alternating nights with a resident theatre company.<sup>1</sup>

During the brief eight year span of his career, Ricketts built over twenty circus structures, with at least one in every major city of the American eastern seaboard. The following is a list of the nineteen circuses whose existence could be confirmed through contemporary sources. The buildings are arranged chronologically according to Ricketts' first appearance in that locale. Each entry includes a brief description as to type of structure, location, opening date, rough dates for its use by Ricketts, and at least one newspaper source for the performance dates cited. Unless otherwise indicated, the final disposition of each structure is unknown.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it should be noted that a nearly complete chronology of Ricketts' extensive activities can be arrived at by rearranging each entry according to the various dates for its use.

## PHILADELPHIA

*Ricketts' Circus* (a fenced in open air arena), opened April 3, 1793, located on



PONY RACE WITH REAL PONIES AT THE PANTHEON

AND RICKETTS'S AMPHITHEATRE, PHILADELPHIA.

JAN 14 1797.

Pony races at Rickett's Circus, from MS. John Durang's memoir. This may have been a stock print; Durang apparently felt it to be accurate. Historical Society of York County, Pa. Collection.

Exterior view, Rickett's Circus, Philadelphia. This view has been incorrectly published as Rickett's New York amphitheatre. Historical Society of York County, Pa. Collection.

Market Street, corner of Twelfth Street, near the Center Square.

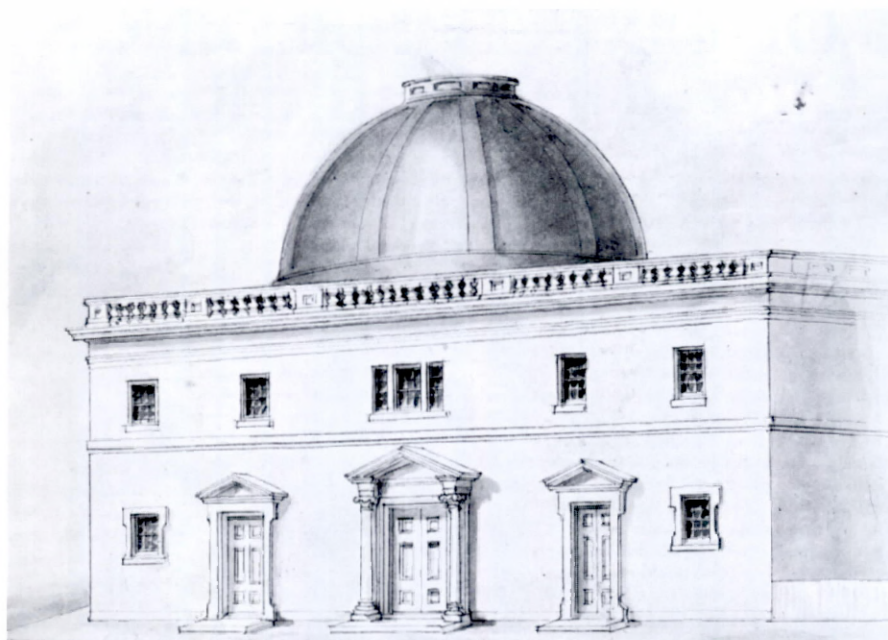
Used by Ricketts April 3, 1793—July 22, 1793; September 20, 1794—November 14, 1794. (*Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser and Aurora and General Advertiser*) Replaced by

*Ricketts' New Amphitheatre* (a permanent roofed and winterized circus-theatre with artificial lighting), open-



COURT HOUSE, RICKETTS'S CIRCUS, AND O'LEARY'S HOTEL





*Lailson's Circus, 5th Street above Prune, Philad.*

ed on October 19, 1795, located on the southwest corner of Chestnut and Sixth Streets. Equipped with both stage and circus ring. Remodelled in October 1796 and subsequently referred to variously as *Ricketts' Amphitheatre*, *Pantheon* and *Ricketts' Amphitheatre*, *Pantheon*, and *Ricketts' Circus*.

Used by Ricketts October 19, 1795—April 23, 1796; October 10, 1796—February 23, 1797; March 4, 1797, for President George Washington's retirement ball; December 26, 1798—March 25, 1799; November 21, 1799. (*Aurora and General Advertiser* and *Gazette of the United States and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser*) Destroyed by fire on December 17, 1799.

#### NEW YORK CITY

*Rickett's Circus* (an open air arena), opened on August 7, 1793, located on Greenwich Street near the Government House and the North River. Used by Ricketts August 7, 1793—November 4, 1793. (*Daily Advertiser* and *Diary or Loudon's Register*) Replaced by

*Ricketts' New Equestrian Amphitheatre* (a permanent winterized building with artificial lighting), opened November 24, 1794, located on southwest corner of Broadway and Oyster Pasty Lane. Shortly after opening a stage was installed. Remodeled in September, 1795. Used by Ricketts November 24, 1794—April 21, 1795; September 15-19, 1795; May 7, 1796—July 29, 1796; September 21-29, 1796. (*American Minerva* and *Minerva and Mercantile Advertiser*) Replaced by

*Ricketts' New Circus* (a permanent winterized circus-theatre with artificial lighting), opened on March 16, 1797, located on Greenwich near Rec-tor Street. Various referred to as the

Philip Lailson day and dated Ricketts in Philadelphia, Pa. during the 1796 season, opening on August 10. This is an exterior view of the Lailson building. University of Pennsylvania Library Collection.

*New Circus* and the *Greenwich Street Theatre*. Used by Ricketts March 16, 1797—July 12, 1797; December 6-13, 1798. (*Diary or Loudon's Register*, *New-York Gazette and General Advertiser*, and *Commercial Advertiser*) Destroyed sometime in June, 1799.

#### CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

*Ricketts' Circus* (an open air arena), opened December 18, 1793, located on Tradd-Street. Used by Ricketts December 18, 1793—March 29, 1794. (*Columbia Herald* and *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*).

#### NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

*Ricketts' Circus* (an open air arena), opened and used during May, 1794. (*Virginia Chronicle*).

#### RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

*Circus* (for open air performances), opened and used by Ricketts during May, 1794, located on the Richmond Walk. (*Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser*).

#### BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

*Circus* (for open air performances), opened July 3, 1794, located near Wind-mill. Used by Ricketts July 3, 1794—September 10, 1794. (*Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*).

*Ricketts' Equestrian Circus* (built by subscription for Mr. Franklin), opened May, 1799, located in a back street near the Falls and the Middle Bridge. Used by Ricketts May, 1799; October 15, 1799—November 5, 1799. (*Federal Gazette* and *Baltimore Daily*

*Advertiser* and *American and Daily Advertiser*).

#### BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

*Ricketts' Amphitheatre* (probably a roofed permanent amphitheatre with stage because evening performances were presented here), opened May 15, 1795, located at the bottom of the Mall. Various referred to as the *New Amphitheatre*, *Boston Amphitheatre*, and *Rickett's Equestrian Pantheon*. Used by Ricketts May 12, 1795—July 23, 1795 (Boston Centinel and *Federal Orrery*).

*Ricketts' New Amphitheatre*

This newspaper advertisement appeared in the *Federal Gazette* and *Philadelphia Daily Advertiser* on July 13, 1793. This was Rickett's first season. Author's Collection.

### RICKETTS'S Equestrian Circus.

THIS DAY, the 13th of July,  
FOR THE

### Benefit of the Poor.

THE entertainments at the Circus will be more generally varied than on any preceding evening, as Mr. Ricketts is extremely desirous of making his performance, peculiarly agreeable, in order to induce as large and respectable a company to visit the circus as possible. The amount of the money received will be placed in the hands of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia, towards establishing a FUND, the annual interest whereof to be distributed under their direction, in supplying poor families with fuel, in the winter season.

The Manuel Exercise will be performed, by particular desire: The leap over the Ribbon and Cane: The Two Flying Mercuries upon a single horse: The Hornpipe, with & without the reins, on a single horse in full speed:

### Johnny Gilpin's

#### JOURNEY:

With a number of other new Equestrian Exercises, too numerous to be detailed in an advertisement: but the public may rest assured, Mr. Ricketts will exert himself to render the Exhibition worthy the attention of those Ladies and Gentlemen who may honour him with their presence, and who, he has no doubt will cheerfully contribute to the Fund intended to be established on this occasion.

#### SIGNIOR SPINACUTA

will perform many extraordinary Feats on the

### Tight Rope.

#### MR. McDONALD

will exhibit some of his best COMIC SCENES.

The whol to conclude with

### Johnny Gilpin's

#### JOURNEY.

Tickets sold at Messrs Bradford's, Rice's, Dobson's, Young's, Campbell's, and Carey's Book Stores, and at the Circus, where places in the boxes may be taken.

The doors will be opened at 5 o'clock, and the performance begin at 6 o'clock.



(probably an open air arena), opened August, 1796, located on Beacon Hill. Used by Ricketts August—September, 1796. (*Boston Centinel* and *Federal Orrery*).

#### PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

*Ricketts' Equestrian Circus* (an open air arena), opened and used by Ricketts in August 1795, located on the Hill near the Powder House. (*Providence Gazette*).

#### HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

*Ricketts' Equestrian Circus* (an open air arena), opened August 18, 1795, located a few rods south of the Ferry. Used by Ricketts August 18, 20, 22, 1795. (*Connecticut Courant*).

#### ALBANY, NEW YORK

*Ricketts' Circus* (an open air arena), opened July 31, 1797, located on the lower end of Greene-Street. Used by Ricketts July 31, 1797—August 8, 1797; possibly November, 1798. (*Albany Gazette* and *Albany Chronicle*).

#### MONTREAL, CANADA

*Ricketts' Circus* (an open air arena), opened September 5, 1797, located near the Powder Magazine. Used by Ricketts September 5, 1797—October, 1797. (*Montreal Gazette*).

*Ricketts' New Amphitheatre* (a permanent winterized amphitheatre with stage and artificial lighting), opened October 31, 1797, located at the end of the parade ground near Notre Dame and Ramparts Streets. Used by Ricketts October 31, 1797—May 3, 1798;

## Ricketts' Circus

LOWER END OF GREENE-STREET.



On Friday, August the 4th, 1797,  
A GREAT VARIETY OF  
EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES,

By Mr. RICKETTS and his COMPANY.

### Broad Sword,

Going through the Guards of different Nations, Offence and Defence, as in real action, &c.

Who is thoroughly trained for the purpose. The legacy of this trade is truly wonderful.

CLOWN to the HORSEMANSHIP—By Mr. DURANG.

Still Wrestling, or a Trial of Skill, over a single Horse—By Mr. Ricketts and Mr. Durang.

Mr. Ricketts will ride with Master Huchins on Witherspoons, to the attitude of—

### A FLYING MERCURY.

A variety of other exercises, both Novel and Pleasing.

THE WHOLE TO CONCLUDE WITH

### The Taylor's Difafter;

Or, Johnny Gilpin's Journey to Brentford—By Mr. Durang.

There to be opened in future as the clock, and the Performance to begin precisely at five.

Days of Performance—Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays.

\* Tickets may be had at the City Tavern, at the Circus, and at Barber & Seagood's Book Store.

BOX 96—1797.

This handbill was used by Rickett's Circus in Philadelphia on August 4, 1797. Harvard Theatre Collection.

October 8-15, 1798. (*Montreal Gazette*).

Final disposition unknown, but was listed in an estate survey of 1810.

#### QUEBEC CITY, CANADA

*Ricketts' Circus* (an open air arena), opened May 31, 1798, located at the

Southwest of the town within the walls near the St. Louis Gate. Used by Ricketts May 31, 1798—August 23, 1798. (*Quebec Gazette*).

#### ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

*Ricketts' Equestrian Circus* (an open air arena), opened May, 1799, located in a field opposite the governor's house. Used by Ricketts for two weeks during May, 1799. (*Maryland Gazette*) As was the usual practice, according to John Durang, this building was sold for half price.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed treatment of Ricketts' performance activities, see my article "Entertainments at John B. Ricketts' Circus, 1793-1800," *Educational Theatre Journal*, pp. 187-202.

<sup>2</sup>All information provided has been culled from contemporary newspaper and diary accounts. A fully documented account of Ricketts can be found in my Ph.D. diss., "John B. Ricketts' Circus 1793-1800," University of Illinois at Urbana, 1977. A discussion of the circus prior to Ricketts can be found in Isaac J. Greenwood, *The Circus and Its Origins and Growth Prior to 1835* (New York: The Dunlap Society, 1898), while Stuart Thayer's *Annals of the American Circus 1793-1829* (Manchester, Michigan: Rymack Printing Company, 1976) is perhaps the best survey available for the period.

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## The Sparks Circus - through 1928

By Gordon M. Carver

### SEASON OF 1925

Early reports in January of 1925 from the winter quarters at Macon, Georgia, indicated much activity with wild animal acts, as again the show was to be strong in this department. This was a period in the American Circus when most shows were featuring animal acts of all kinds and Sparks was following the trend. Approximately half of the acts in the show, as we will see, would involve animals, both wild and domestic (or tame). The principal trainers were Franz Woska, and Steve Batty for the wild animals, Walter McClain in his second year with the elephants, Bert Mayo, Allen Hauser, Jack Casteel, new this year, and Capt. Tiebor handling all the others.

Late in January there were heavy rains in middle Georgia and the Ocmulgee River, which passed through Macon, overflowed its banks and flooded the winter quarters. No material damage was done to the shows equipment that could not be repaired before opening day, but some of the animals did have to be removed to higher ground.

By early March the staff and program was all lined up for the coming opening. A number of new names would be seen in the performance but the management and bosses saw few changes. A new Mack truck had been purchased, it being the first for the show. On March 14 two tigers were born and the day before opening, April 8, another litter was born. Both were to be heavily featured in the menagerie. This season as in the last few, the show was to be sponsored at some stops by the Elks. In this connection *The Elks Magazine* for February had an article *The Man Who Drove Forty Horses* by

Earl Chapin May about Jake Posey, again the boss hostler.

So after the usual winter quarters preparation the season again started in Macon this year on April 9, a Thursday. This completed their sixth winter in this Georgia city. Both daily papers ran ten page sections about the circus the day before the opening. Prior to this, during the winter they had given the show much favorable publicity. It was a sunshiny day and both performances drew capacity houses. Contributing to this was the fact that all the factories, banks and business establishments closed at noon so that it was a half holiday for the entire town. As usual the orphanages of the city were guests of the various civic organizations at the show. Also in attendance were the student bodies of Wesleyan Female College and Mercer University. Pathe News and a weekly syndicated news columnist were on hand for three days prior to the opening for coverage of the event.

The parade was highly commended. It was stated that it was "greatly enlarged this season which was quite noticeable". While this was a nice bit of

This 1925 lot view of the Sparks show clearly shows the big spread of canvas used by the circus. Pfening Collection.



The above lithograph was one of a number of new designs made by the Erie Litho Co. for the Sparks Circus in 1925. It is a half sheet streamer. Circus World Museum Collection.

publicity for the show it was, as far as we can determine, just the reviewer's idea for there is no indication that anything in way of rolling stock had been added to the show. It is possible that the mounted groups were larger and perhaps more led stock was used but that is the only possibility. And the show still had only six elephants.

Again the costuming of the parade was spoken of in very high terms, it being said that no circus "is better dressed, better costumed or as immaculate as Sparks Circus." In this connection, it should be noted that at this time and for some years prior, the designs and patterns for all the show's costumes, for both performers and animals, had been made by Addie (Mrs. Charles) and Vera (Mrs. Clifton) Sparks. While a group of local seamstresses did most of the sewing, Addie and Vera also spent their share of time at the sewing machine.

The big show opened with a new Spec, "L'Or, the Jungle Queen" written and produced by J.H. Del Vecchio," a musical extravaganza of





Two Mack trucks were added to the show in 1925, one is shown here pulling the "Clown Behind the Curtains" bandwagon with the side show band on top ready for the parade. Eddie Jackson Photo.

barbaric splendor with costumes by the well-known Broadway house of Brooks Brothers." While Brooks Brothers may have supplied some of the costumes, as noted above the Mesdames Sparks were responsible for most of them. Jack Phillips and his band of 21 pieces gave excellent support to the prima donna Nora Earle in the title role. She was supported by Karl Mosher, tenor, and Hazel Bailey, soprano. This was in the day of the elaborate specs and Del Vecchio later moved on to the American Circus Corp., for which he created a number of them. In fact this spec was copied by Sells-Floto Circus in 1926 titled "The Bride and the Beasts". This opening spec was followed by twenty numbers, about the same as the previous year.

The rest of the program ran as follows:

No. 2 — Clyde Widener had the principal and hurdling mule in Ring 1, Bert Mayo had his mile-a-minute pony, Gordon, on the revolving table and T.N.T. the bucking mule with colored doves in Ring 3. At the same time a large number of "runabouts" were produced on the hippodrome track by Paul Wentzel and his eight clowns, Pete Mardo, Abie Goldstein, Charles Fortuna, Harvey Spaulding, Stanley White, Charles Kline, Harry Daven-

The Sparks unloaded train is pictured in Lynchburg, Va., on April 14, 1925. Eddie Jackson Photo.



port and Tim Vanderford, three less than had started the previous year.

No. 3 — Franz Woska had his five tiger group appearing in the steel arena performing many new and novel stunts in a rapid manner with no stalls or waits.

No. 4 — The Orantes with novel hand stand offerings were in Ring 1. In Ring 3 Kaichi Yumada and Sakato drew heavy applause. Kaichi Yumada walked up a flight of twelve steps on his hands and Sakata did a backward foot slide on a wire from the top of the tent to the ground.

No. 5 — In Rings 1 and 3 Jack Casteel and Allen Hauser presented ludicrous baboons, dogs and ponies. This was very appealing to children as all the animals were elaborately dressed. On the track the clowns presented another flock of novelties.

No. 6 — This display had Martha Kloske with six perfectly matched gray horses in Ring 1 and Prof. Ernest Kloske with six sorrels in Ring 3 in a fine liberty horse display. The act closed with a group of football horses assisted by clowns and proved to be a riot for the audience.

No. 7 — Now came Franz Woska with his mixed group of polar bears (3) and great dane dogs in the steel arena. As usual his presentation was fast and snappy. In the end rings Lorain Casteel and Loretta Tucker presented white posing horses. This offering was extremely pleasing to the ladies in the audience and drew salvos of applause and much admiration.

No. 8 — Frances Widener and Babe Pope each presented three elephants in the end rings in their very capable manner. The elephants were splendid



The sky-view red ticket wagon of the Sparks shows was trimmed in gold lettering and scroll work in 1925. Pfening Collection.

and drew considerable applause at the end of the act.

No. 9 — This display was the climax of the wild animal acts with Steve Batty putting his five jungle bred lions through a thrilling and hair raising exhibition that brought gasps from the audience. These lions were the original group that had appeared in the movie "Tarzan and the Apes" and had been written about in several magazines.

No. 10 — The elephants appeared again in this display, one with two ponies in each end ring in a novel presentation by Grace McLain and Babe Pope. In front of the center ring as the steel arena was being dismantled the clowns presented a series of new animal efforts including riding pigs, monkey walk arounds and Abie Goldstein's geese and chickens. This was indeed a variegated display.

At this point the first announcement of the Wild West and Wrestling after show concert was made. The announcer was George Conner.

No. 11 — In the center ring Sparks presented the Riding Rooneys, a bareback act of two men and two women in one of the most laughable equestrian numbers extant and was one of the outstanding features of the show. Charles Rooney was the star performer.

No. 12 — This display was the outstanding acrobatic presentation of the show. In Ring 1 was the Orento troupe of four in very clever head to head balancing and juggling. In Ring 3 were the Yumada Japs in their posturing, screen kicking and oriental acrobatics. In the center ring the famous Sie Taber Troupe of seven Algerian whirlwind acrobats with Dainty Miriam, considered one of the top flight lady acrobats of all time, whose elevated platform act very nearly stopped the show as did her work on the hippodrome track at the finish of the act when the entire troupe turned



handsprings and flipflops all around the big top at lightning speed.

No. 13 — Again the clowns appeared with a number of very amusing walkarounds.

No. 14 — This was an outstanding group of wire walkers. Pedrosa worked in the center ring on a slack wire of unusual length doing a sensational turn without the use of aparasol. This was his first appearance in the United States and it was expected that he would go far. Fritzie Clayton occupied Ring 1 in a very clever dancing number on the tight wire, while Minnie Rooney appeared in Ring 3 in a similar tight wire act demonstrating her versatility.

No. 15 — Vera Earle came on here in the center ring with her pigeons and her rendition of "Rose Sweet Rose" while seated on her horse, Lady Fashion. With Hazel Bailey and Peggy Cline assisting this was a show stopper. At the conclusion of this number Abie Goldstein followed with a burlesque "Act Beautiful" in which his roosters and a mule take part, the roosters alighting on Abie's head and emitting a crow that could be heard above the band, making a riotous finish.

No. 16 — This number brought out the famous Sparks rotation group of sixteen perfectly matched German thoroughbreds worked by their original trainer, Prof. Ernst Kloske. Eight are dapples and eight are sorrels. No horse act in American is probably given with more pep and precision and at the conclusion of the finale, the hind leg rear, by the entire sixteen, the applause is deafening.

No. 17 — This was the only aerial display in the program. For the first time in some years Walter Guice and his aerial bar group was missing. Over Rings 1 and 3 Babe Pope and Loretta did pretty iron jaw numbers, while the rest of the top was occupied by ten swinging ladders used by the following girls: Gertrude West, Minnie Rooney, Mary O'Shea, Peggy Cline, Lee Mary Earle, Lorain Casteel, Grace McLain, Dorothy Batty, Rose Nimmo and Hazel Bailey. This was a simple, unspectacular number but very popular with the audience.

No. 18 — Again the animal acts came on with some very novel offerings. In the center ring Capt. Tiebor's group of rope walking, talking and musical sea lions, worked by Mary Tiebor, were the usual sure fire hit. In Ring 1 Jack Casteel performed a group of South American llamas while Allen Hauser in Ring 3 had a group of zebras. Credit for developing and training both of these novel groups, difficult to train, was due Allen Hauser.

This act was followed by the second Wild West and Wrestling Concert or after show announcement, this one made by Harry Bert.

No. 19 — Now near the end came the dancing horses that made the Sparks Circus famous. Appearing astride the horses were Bert Mayo, the principal trainer, Loraine Casteel, Myrtle Mayo, Frances Widener, Rose Nimmo, Gertrude West, Vera Earle, Peggy Cline, Loretta Tucker, and Seniorita Bohanara in the center ring in a very novel trotting display.

No. 20 — Again the Orantos appeared in Ring 1, this time in a highly sensational double high perch number. In Ring 3 the Yumada Japs presented a similar offering that always held attention.



This view of the steam calliope was taken in Hancock, Mich., on June 27, 1925. Joseph Meinardi Photo.

No. 21 — The show closed with a strikingly costumed version of the English Fox Hunt with twelve horses going over the high and broad jumps.

The show lasted about an hour and forty-five minutes. It is noteworthy that twelve of the twenty-one displays were basically trained animal acts. While one might suppose that with more animal performers there would be fewer people in the dressing top this was not necessarily so. The roster in the ladies dressing room had 24 names and the men's 35 names for a total of 59. This did not include the 21 bandsmen.

With the conclusion of the "big Show" those who had bought tickets to the "concert" were seated in the front side of the reserves and as soon as the rest of the audience had been herded out, witnessed the Wild West and Wrestling Concert. Featured in this were Bulldog Martin who would take on any local boy for a five minute wrestling test with \$5 to the winner which was almost always "Bulldog". The wild west show featured the Australian O'Sheas in bull whip manipulations, Weaver Gray in trick and fancy roping, Clyde and Frances Widener in trick riding, Dave and Rose Nimmo in trick riding and roping and Jimmy Saunders in trick riding. With this show lasting about 15-20 minutes it meant that with the big show star-

ting at 8 P.M. it was all out and over by 10:15 P.M. at the latest. This meant that it was no problem to have the lot cleared by midnight. Normally all that was left on the lot when the big top was emptied was the big top, the dressing top and ring stock top. All the rest was on the way to the runs. It is interesting that Sparks and RBBB were the only shows at that time that did not have the ring stock and dressing rooms in the same tent but had a separate tent for each.

After the Thursday opening in Macon a long one day jump of 326 miles was made to Gastonia, N.C., for a

Saturday stand. From there the show moved into Virginia where it spent almost the entire next two weeks in Danville, Lynchburg, Farmville, for an evening only date, Norfolk, Petersburg, and Richmond followed by Charlottesville, Saunton, Lexington, Clifton Forge and Ronceverte for another afternoon only. It then moved into West Virginia at Buckley followed by Logan, Huntington, Parkersburg and Fairmount. Almost all of these towns brought the show good business as it was well known in the area.

It arrived in Pennsylvania at Uniontown on Friday, May 1, and finished the fourth week at Charleroi. This was followed by McKeesport, New Kensington, Vandergrift, near which in Brady John Sparks got his start in the outdoor show world, New Brighton, Oil City and Warren. For the sixth week it showed in Pottsville, Shenandoah, Mt. Carmel, Sunbury, Bloomsburg and Pittston. Then starting May 18 came Hazelton, Tamaqua, and Bethlehem. It is interesting to note that the show was now playing the larger towns and smaller cities skipping most of the small towns that had formerly made up a good part of its route. After its stay in the Keystone state to complete the 7th week it moved into New Jersey for one date, May 21, at Westfield, where it got the usual fine advance newspaper publicity. It finished the week on Staten Island at Tompkinsville and Tottenville.

Sparks now moved to Long Island



for a week of dates. This, the 8th week, included Queens Village, Bayside, Jackson Heights, Huntington, Hempstead and Rockville Center. At this time the first of only two "want" ads used during the season appeared in *The Billboard* asking for a cornet player who must be "union and experienced in circus work". The second "want" ad did not appear until August 8 when again the band was in need of musicians, a solo clarinet and first clarinet. While there were some personnel changes in both staff and performers, particularly in the side show, during the season apparently all were replaced without resort to the columns of *The Billboard*. As for the band, it started with 21 musicians and ended with 20. In addition to Jack Phillips, the leader and cornet, at seasons end there were four cornets, one on flute and piccolo, three on clarinets, two on horns, two on trombones, two on baritones, one on Eb bass, one on BBB bass, one snare drum, one bass drum and J.H. DelVecchio on the air calliope.

After the Long Island stay a long

two ticket wagons, the old clerestory office wagon and the "Clowns Behind the Curtains" tab which carried side show props and sold tickets for the reserved seat section.

As mentioned, the pit show was larger than it had been. Capt. Scott assisted Katz in managing it. There were two ticket boxes on the front, one more than formerly. Inside the attractions were a Zulu group of wild men, fire eater, a one man band, a giant ape (baboon) "terror of the jungles," and a pit of snakes. At ten cents a ticket, the small town folks found this a winner, as did the Sparks office wagon.

The main side show was much the same as in 1924. It was a show having vaudeville type acts rather than freaks, and with, usually, ten acts cost 25¢. William DeBarrie, who was to be active in the circus and carnival side show business for many years, assisted Conner in running the show. He was the inside lecturer and also did a Punch and Judy act as well as a magic turn. His wife Hilda had trained cockatoos. Other acts that had started

The Canadian tour this year, unlike the long one of two months 1924, lasted only a week and two days. It was a fast trip across Canada from Ogdensburg, N.Y., to Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Of the eight moves in Canada five were over a hundred miles. It started at Kingston, Ont. Then came South Falls and Pembroke from where a jump into North Bay was 140 miles and the show did not arrive until 9:30 A.M. but the parade was off the lot at noon and the afternoon show was only a few minutes late. The week ended at North Cobalt and Timmons. Then from Timmons to Sudbury there was a Sunday run of 338 miles with the train arriving the next evening at 9:30. The lot was next to the runs and the show unloaded immediately but did not put up any tents until the next morning. The following day at Blind River after another fairly long jump of 102 miles they gave only one show. This was done primarily to get an early start and through customs back into the States the next day at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., Monday, June 24. The week finished out at Newberry, Marquette and Hancock.

At Sault Ste. Marie the show had its first accident of the season. Steve Batty was attacked by his lions at the afternoon show. He was hospitalized there but his injuries were not serious and he was back on the show within a week. All through Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota the show got glowing after notices. *The Calumet (Mich.) News*, where the show started the 13th week June 29, said, "the show is one of the best that ever visited here, having originality and variety. The circus is everything that is claimed for it. It is clean, well-managed and is made up of high class acts and wild animal performances." The middle of this week was spent in Ishpenning, Escanaba, Iron Mountain and Ironwood. The week ended at Ashland, Wis., Saturday, July 4, where the show had a big crowd at the afternoon performance even though "Coming" paper for the Ringling-Barnum show was up for August 1.

The first part of the next week was spent in Duluth, Superior, Wis., and Virginia, Minn., after which it returned to Canada for a short three day stay starting at Fort Francis, Ont. Then on July 10-11 it played the first of three two day stands of the season in of all place 4u7 William. The week of July 13 opened at Bemidji, Minn., where the town fathers sent the show after its appearance there a letter of endorsement and an invitation to return. Then came Crookston, Fergus Falls, St. Cloud, Willmar and Hutchinson. The next week started in Wisconsin at Lady Smith, Rhinelander and Shawano followed by a move to Michigan at Menominee and then back to Wisconsin at Manitowoc and Sheboygan.



This large bill stand was used in Carmel, Pa., in 1925. It outdid the John Robinson paper posted below for a stand two days earlier. Carver Collection.

Sunday run of 229 miles was made to Bennington, Vt., for June 1, followed by Rutland, Burlington, Montpelier and St. Albans. Then the show moved into New York at Plattsburg Saturday, June 6. Schenectady was next on Monday where a new menagerie was put into the air for the first time. The following day at Glens Falls the parade was delayed in leaving the lot because of a severe thunderstorm at parade time. However, it was back on the lot in good time and the afternoon show started on time to good crowds. The evening show had capacity attendance. The rest of the week was spent in Little Falls, the birthplace of the original John Robinson, Watertown, Potsdam and Ogdensburg.

On the midway there was a side show under the management of George V. Conner, the pit show, this year some larger than formerly managed by Charles Katz, two balloon stands, and two food and drink stands. There were

the season and were still with it at the end were Hilda Miller and her snakes, the two Carson Sisters doing an impalement (knife throwing) act, Raymond Carson on his xylophone, the two Rowans in bag punching plus. There were several other acts that came and went during the season, but with Charles Holloway's Minstrels there were usually ten or eleven novelty acts on hand. The minstrel show of fifteen people included a ten piece band which also rode one of the bandwagons in the parade giving forth its snappy music, and five singers, dancers and comedians. This was a real blackface ensemble, and for anyone who has never seen such a group, their performance alone was almost worth the price of the ticket.





As the season approached the halfway point at the end of July it played on July 27, Marshfield, Wis., where it received more letters of endorsement from the town fathers and a request to return. Next came Stevenspoint, Wisconsin Rapids, La Crosse, and Baraboo with the week ending at Freeport, Ill. At Baraboo the show had one of the best days of the season so far. It then started to move south through Illinois into Missouri and later in August into Kansas and Arkansas. Starting the week of August 3 the show appeared in Davenport, Ia., and then moved back to Illinois for Kewanee, Princeton, Galesburg, Beardstown and Jacksonville. At Princeton the town officials refused all offers of free tickets because they wanted the show to think so well of the town that it would keep returning.

After the week of August 10 in Missouri at Fulton, Marshall, Boonville, Clinton, Springfield and Carthage they moved into Kansas at Wichita and Arkansas City followed by Oklahoma at Pawhuska, Tulsa, Bartlesville, and Cushing. Many of these were larger towns that were used to seeing the bigger shows, but in spite of this gave the Sparks Circus a warm welcome. The 21st week starting August 24 saw the show at Oklahoma City, Enid, and Ponca City followed by the Kansas towns of Anthony, Newton and El Dorado.

In mid-September the center ring Cuban slack wire star, Pedrosa, left and was replaced by an outstanding tight wire dancer from Brazil, Miachahua Ortega. This was an excellent change for the show for she turned out to be a real show stopper and stayed with Sparks for several years receiving much publicity and praise wherever she appeared. It was about this time that the show began to encounter frequent heavy rains but without detriment to business. In Fayetteville, Ark., September 5, the parade was cancelled because of rain. This ended the week of Chanute, Kan., Coffeyville, Pittsburg, Joplin, Mo., and Rogers, Ark.

Then came a week in Oklahoma at Muskogee, Okmulgee OLDEN-

**The black side show band is pictured in front of their bandwagon ready for a 1925 parade. Eddie Jackson Photo.**

VILLE Ida, Hugo, which was later to become the home of the various Kelly-Miller circuses, and Idabel. Next, the week of September 14 had the show in Arkansas at Little Rock, Hot Springs, Pine Bluff, Warren, El Dorado and Camden, while the 25th week was used to play the mostly smaller towns of Russellville, Morrilton, Newport, Walnut Ridge, Searcy and Helena. At Helena, September 26 it rained so hard the evening show had to be cancelled. Here also, Batty's lions again attacked him, clawing one shoulder rather badly so that he had to be left behind in the hospital.

The bad weather with rains coming almost daily persisted through most of October and yet business continued to be good. The next four and a half weeks of this period, except for four days, were spent in Mississippi starting in Natchez, then moving to Louisiana at Baton Rouge and back to Mississippi at Vicksburg followed by Cleveland, Charleston and Belzoni. As will be noted the population of many of the towns played during the coming weeks could each be seated in the big top at one show, so it is an interesting commentary on the drawing power of the show. On October 5 at Yazoo City, Steve Batty returned to the show. This week continued with Water Valley, Canton, Kosciusko, West Point and Okolona.

With only seven weeks of the season left on October 12 the show was in Trenton, Tenn., Union City and Dyersburg, then in Kentucky at Mayfield, back to Tennessee at Jackson and then into Mississippi at Grenada. The 29th week saw the show still in Mississippi at Lexington, Brookhaven, McComb, Columbia, Laurel and Hattiesburg. Next starting October 26 the show played Tupelo, Corinth, Florence, Ala., Jasper, Aniston and ended at La Grange, Ga. Here on October 31, the lot was under water when the show arrived. Another lot about a mile out of town was found but the parade had to be cancelled. The

train had not arrived until 9 A.M. and was spotted at 9:15 and the first wagon did not get to the lot until 10:45. In spite of these problems the doors opened at 2:30 and the show started at 3:00, only one hour late, playing to a large audience who had patiently waited. Then to cap the climax while the show was loading that night there was a slight snow flurry.

As the show entered its last month the staff was virtually the same as had left Macon in the Spring, and most were old timers under Sparks banner. George Singleton had the canvas with about 50 men. Jake Posey was responsible for the wagons to and from the runs and lot as well as pulling the wagons in the parade. To do this he had four eight-horse, seven six-horse and three four-horse teams. He also had three two-horse teams at the runs to do the unloading and loading. This added up to a total of 92 horses for which he was responsible. He also had one Mack Truck to help with the hauling. In the ring stock department Harry Phillips had 16 men to take care of about 35-40 horses plus eight ponies. To take care of all these horses there were three blacksmiths.

The dining department was handled by Jack Fitzgerald and 26 helpers. 25 men under Whitey Lehrter handled the props in the big top including erecting and tearing down the steel arena for the wild animal acts. Finally getting the wagons on and off the flats was the responsibility of Charles O'Connor with fourteen men. All told excluding about 30 who worked ahead of the show, it took about 360 people to move it and entertain those who came to watch the parade and those who came

**Mrs. Curtis Rooney, of the "Riding Rooneys" posed for this 1925 photo on the Sparks show. Eddie Jackson Photo.**





to the lot - a very substantial organization.

The first week in November was all spent in Georgia at Fitzgerald, Thomasville, Bainbridge, Cuthbert and Americus except for Wednesday when they dropped down in Alabama at Dothan. The show was now heading for Florida. November 9 they were in Waynesboro followed by Statesboro, Dublin and Vidalia. Here they had to cancel the parade. Then came Douglas and Adele which was an afternoon only date so that they could make an early get away for the long 467 mile run from there to Miami over the weekend. In Miami they played their first ever three day date to very good business. Then, the following Saturday, November 21, after Ft. Lauderdale and Homestead, they made another first by being the first railroad circus to play Key West. As the long season drew to a close they started their last full week with a two day stand at West Palm Beach followed by Ft. Pierce. At Daytona the next day a very narrow street at the runs made it difficult for the wagons to get through. However, a good afternoon and a capacity at night made it worthwhile. The week ended at St. Augustine and Jacksonville.

On Monday, November 30, in Savannah, under the auspices of the Elks the 1925 tour came to an end. It had been a long one with 17,578 miles being traversed by the time it was back in quarters. Charles Sparks was quoted as saying that it had been only an average season, compared with recent years, but still a winner.

### SEASON OF 1926

An early announcement in *The*

Paul Wenzel is shown in 1925 on Sparks. He was later on the Ringling Barnum Circus for many years. Eddie Jackson Photo.



Jake Posey, "last of the forty horse drivers" is shown on the Sparks lot just prior to a 1925 parade. Eddie Jackson Photo.

*Billboard* raises an interesting point about the size of the show prior to 1926. It has been assumed that when the show went to twenty cars in 1923 the number of 72' flats had been increased from six to nine. It would now appear that this assumption was incorrect and that the increase had only been to eight. This also jives with the statement at that time that they had obtained two car loads of wagons from Bode Wagon Co., of Cincinnati. Parenthetically it must also be added that actually the major part of the two car loads of wagons above accredited to Bode came not from Bode but from Moeller in Baraboo.

This question arises at this time for early in 1926 it was announced that one stock car was being replaced by another 70' flat (could this have been a Venice Co., car which are almost identical to the Mt. Vernons except that they were two feet shorter), and that another car load of wagons had been received.

All this would tend to clarify some doubt the number of cage wagons on the show prior to 1926. There had been one or two references to the show having ten but since with nine flats we knew definitely that there had been twelve cages we had assumed the reference to ten had been in error. Now however, it would seem likely that until the ninth flat was added together with the wagons for it that in all probability the ten cages prior to 1926 was correct and that two additional cages were obtained along with the additional flat. Thus it now seems fairly certain that the train consist prior to 1926 had been one advance, 8 flats, 6 stocks and 5 coaches but that in 1926 it became one advance, 9 flats, 5 stocks and 5 coaches.

It was also reported that one of the wagons of the carload received was a fifteen footer to accommodate one of the two new Knickerbocker generators that were being added to the show. This would indicate that the show had prior

to this been only partially electrified. The big top seating was said to have been enlarged too, but we have no record to indicate if the big top was also enlarged to accommodate more seating. In 1925 the big top was reported to have been a 130' round with three 40' middles so it was probably was increased to a 140' round with three 40' middles. In any event, the show now appears to have reached its ultimate in size, except for future slight enlargements in the size of the big top.

By early March it was reported that the show was all ready for the season to start. On Thursday, March 25, the advance car left for Augusta, Ga., the show's first read stand scheduled for Friday, April 9. Again J. M. Randolph was the Manager of Car #1 with about 22 men to whet the appetite of the "local yokels" for the coming spectacle of the Sparks Circus. And T. W. Ballenger was continuing as General Agent to route the show into the most lucrative territory he could find, a job he had been quite successful at.

Again Macon was the opening stand of what was reported to be the 40th annual tour, probably not far off if we consider John Sparks original beginnings in show business as the start, about 1885. The weather was fine and the town, following what had become an annual custom of making Sparks Circus opening day a holiday with the schools and most businesses and factories closing for the afternoon, gave the show capacity houses at both shows. The downtown was liberally decorated with flags and bunting sponsored by all the civic organizations.

During the preceding week both Charles and Clifton Sparks were guests of honor at several civic functions. Two dances were held at the Macon Hotel with the music being furnished by Charles Holloway's Minstrel Band from the side show. The Elks also entertained the circus people at a luncheon and dance. Chief Iron Shell, Sioux tribe, who accompanied twenty Indians from the Rosebud Reservation, who were to be in the Wild West after show as an added feature, was also a guest. And both Macon



newspapers devoted a special edition to the circus while the Fox Movietone News had a crew taking pictures of the show for movie screens across the country.

The parade came off without a hitch and, according to the local reporters, was a continuing array of imposing tableau wagons and new cages resplendent in gold and glitter, and by far the longest in the history of the Sparks Circus. This reference to new cages and the show's longest parade would further tend to confirm the comments concerning the probable increase in size of the show for the 1926 season. The decorating and painting of the wagons, except for the new ones which arrived ready for use, was the work of Mike Carey and an assistant.

Both the side show under the management of Sparks oldtimer George V. Connor and the pit show with Charles Katz as manager broke all records for opening day in Macon. All the concessions, both inside and outside stands in the seats, under the direction of Bobby Worth, formerly of the Ringling-Barnum show, with eleven men also enjoyed a big day.

The performance under the direction of Bert Mayo and his assistant Allen Hauser ran very smoothly for an opening day. Danny Flynn and his crew of property men did a remarkable job in their handling of the new enlarged steel arena and animal chute. All of the costumes were new and drew much very favorable comment from the press and public.

The program ran as follows:

No. 1 - Introductory walkaround followed by an elaborate version of the preceding years operatic spectacle, *The Wedding of L'Ora, The Jungle Queen*, which was written and produced by J. H. DelVecchio. It featured Alice Sohn, prima donna; Hazel Bailey, soprano, and George Sohn, baritone. It was beautifully costumed and the work of the singers and others drew much favorable comment.

No. 2 - Performing dogs, baboons and ponies were worked in the end rings by Allen Hauser and Jack Casteel. The steel arena was used by Harriette Guilfoyle with her seven leopards.

No. 3 - This act had the sparks football horses performed by Allen Hauser and Bert Mayo. The clowns filled the hippodrome track under the direction Paul Wenzel.

No. 4 - Franz Woska presented an unusual polar bear act in the steel arena. Performing with the bears were Great Dane Dogs.

No. 5 - This number had a bevy of pretty girls in the air including Kula Yorke, the Waters Sisters and Ray Glaum in feats of dental dexterity, and Frances Widener, Maud Earl, Babe Pope, Martha Burnett, Bea Sells, Doris Miller, Loraine Casteel, Grace McLain,



The side show band is ballying for an opening on the Sparks Circus in 1926. Carver Collection.

and Mary Lennett on the swinging ladders.

No. 6 - This was a real thriller - Steve Batty and his six lions. This was a "fighting" lion act and Batty paid well for his daring by being attacked by his animals frequently.

No. 7 - Two groups of three elephants each worked by Frances Widener and Babe Pope in a fast moving act.

No. 8 - Franz Woska was reputed to have one of the best tiger acts in the circus world. This was a big group for that time with nine animals (three more than in 1925) including Cora who was a record breaking long distance leaper.

No. 9 - In each end ring there was a mixed group of ponies and elephants. On the hippodrome track the clowns were again out in force. This year the clown alley had Paul Wenzel as the producing clown with the following clowns dispensing the laughs; Charley Fortuna, Minert DeOrlo, Red Sells, the three Sonnie brothers, Bernie Griggs, Bill Lennett, Harry Davenport, Robert Horne, Alf. Green, Jack Howe and Ray Glaum. With thirteen on the roster again Sparks had its largest contingent yet.

No. 10 - The Riding Rooneys in their comedy bareback act was one of leading acts in the show.

No. 11 - Again the clowns came out on the track.

No. 12 - Again the center ring was given over to a star act - Tom and Betty Waters, tight wire dancers extraordinary.

No. 13 - This number was the big feature act of the show - Sparks 16 "rotation" liberty horses from Germany worked by Bert Mayo.

No. 14 - In the two end rings there were comedy acrobatic acts. The three Sonnie Bros. were in one and the Sells comedy Three in the other.

No. 15 - The Famous Four Walters on the aerial parallel bars featuring

Walter Guice in his twisters over the bars.

No. 16 - The clowns now made their last appearance on the hippodrome track.

No. 17 - Sparks high school and broad-jumping horses now came on with the following riders; Hazel Hickey, Lorain Casteel, Mabel DeOrlo, Minnie Rooney, Bea Sells, Frances Widener, Myrtle Mayo, Martha Burnett, Grace McLain, Mary Lennett and Bert Mayo with Clyde Widener on Extra Dry, broad jumper, Hazel Hickey on Peggy, high jumper, and Jimmy Saunders on Dixie, high jumper.

No. 18 - The three rings had military pony drills, Rope walking sea lions and Bibb County pigs.

No. 19 - The finale was *The Flag of America* a historical pageant depicting the birth and life of our flag from the time of the time of the Indian to the present day. It featured a band of ten indians headed by Chief Iron Shell. The entire production was written and produced by J. H. DelVecchio and was an outstanding pageant.

As had been its custom over the last several years, after the main performance the customers were invited to buy a ticket for 25¢ and sit in the reserved seat section to watch the combined Wild West and Wrestling Show. The show was headed by Weaver Gray, said to be the Will Rogers of the Circus, Clyde and Frances Widener in trick and fancy roping, Jim Saunders in trick riding and 20 Sioux indians. As an added attraction Joe Nasser, middle weight wrestling challenger, would take on any comers.

It is interesting to note the size of the ticket selling crew for a show the size of Sparks Circus. Bert Wilson supervised the sellers. He was assisted by Jack Bennett who handled the uptown sales, usually set up in one of the local drugstores or department stores, and Harry Wills, who also played the steam calliope in the parade, plus four other men who were in the ticket wagons. Then John Andrews was in





charge of the front door with a couple of ticket takers and then on the tax box, where all pass holders had to exchange their passes and pay the Federal tax for a regular admission ticket, was our old circus historian, Eddie Jackson.

The announcements for the big show during the performance were handled at various times by Al Greene, George Connor and Harry Bert. Al Greene was also responsible for getting the advertisers for the banners to be hung in the big top and on the elephants in the parade. The big top was filled and every elephant in the parade was

The full bannerline of the Sparks Circus in 1926. The Clown Behind the Curtains tab-ticket wagon is at left. Carver Collection.

covered too, a departure for Sparks who had formerly not used advertising banners on the elephants in the parade.

After the Macon opening they moved to Augusta where the *Augusta Chronicle* said of the show, "This show could easily rank as the No. 2 Ringling. There's more show loaded on 19 cars than others would get on 45." Then after the next day at Charleston, a fast move north through North Carolina at Wilmington, New Bern and Elizabeth City got the show into Virginia at Norfolk, Thursday, April 15, followed by Newport News and Richmond. As in 1925, the larger cities were going to be visited in substantial numbers. The third week had the show in Charlottesville, Staunton, Lexington and Covington after which it moved into West Virginia at Minton and Beckley.

Frequent reference was made in *The Billboard* during the season to the winning ways of the Sparks Circus baseball team. In those days many shows had baseball teams drawn for the most part from the staff and dressing room. On the Sparks team Clifton Sparks was their leading pitcher and a good one. In the first game of the season with a local team in Hinton, W. V., April 27, he pitched a no-hitter. Jack Phillips, bandmaster, was the manager while the other players were Walter Guice lf, Minert DeOrlo lb, Ken Anderson 2b, Joe Lyons c, Malcolm Burgess cf, Robert Moore ss, Frank Loring f, Eddie McManus 3b, Harry Bert rf, and Jim Patterson and Clyde Widener relief pitchers.

The next week continued in West Virginia at Logan and Huntington. On Wednesday of that week, April 28, the fourth week of the season they reached Ohio at Marietta followed by a return to West Virginia at Moundsville, Fairmount and Clarksville. Then the fifth week opened in Cumberland, Md., after

which they moved into Pennsylvania at Somerset, Uniontown, Connelville, Greensburg, finishing up near the Sparks hometown at Vandegrift. The week of May 10 was spent at Oil City and Greenville. Then at Warren, O., May 12, Hazel Hickey had her jaw broken on both sides by her horse in a freak accident and had to stay behind in the City Hospital. The next day at East Liverpool a camel was born. The week ended with New Kensington and Kittanning.

Since moving into Pennsylvania at Somerset, except for the two days in Ohio mentioned above they were in Keystone state for fifteen days, mostly in the smaller towns. But then they entered New York for a week of larger towns starting at Olean, May 24. The next day at Hornell they had two capacity houses in spite of wait paper put up the day before by Sells-Floto. After Corning, Elmira and Ithaca they closed out the week at Binghamton with more capacity houses with "coming paper" of both the Sells-Floto Circus for June 22 and the 101 Ranch Wild West Show for June 28 having been posted. In the week after Binghamton they played many of the larger cities of Pennsylvania - Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Hazelton, Mt. Carmel, Shamokin and Tamaqua followed the next week by Lebanon, Pottstown, Norristown and Bethlehem - before moving into New Jersey at Westfield, June 11 where in spite of poor weather they had another day of capacity houses. After finishing the week next day at Stapleton, Staten Island, they moved to Jackson Heights for two days to open the week on Long Island. The other towns that week were Bayside, Queens, Hempstead and Bayshore.

During the stay on Long Island *The Billboard* gave the show its second of three full reviews during the season. Such coverage by *The Billboard* was almost unheard of. A second mid-season review of some shows was not unusual - but three! There was only one change from the opening at Macon. Harriett Guilfoyle who had been handling the seven trained leopards in the second display had left and they were being put through their routines by Dolly Castle who would finish out the season in this capacity. At this time an ad appeared in *The Billboard* for novelty acts for the side show, the one area in the show which always seemed to have a high turnover. Apparently the property boss, Denny Flynn, had also left for the show wanted a boss property man who "who must join quick". While the show was on Long Island they had many show folks as visitors from New York City as well as various local luminaries including John Horn.

As of the middle of June, except for Denny Flynn mentioned above there had been no changes in the department

This 1926 Sparks newspaper ad illustrates typical Roland Butler artwork, the art and lettering style was later used by Butler on Ringling-Barnum. Pfening Collection.

(Season of 1926.)

**ATHENS, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22**  
KING AVENUE SHOW GROUNDS

*The MASTERPIECE OF THE TENTED WORLD!*

**SPARKS CIRCUS**

THIS SEASON AUGMENTED BY THE  
EARTH'S MOST WONDERFUL  
DISPLAY OF  
**TRAINED WILD BEASTS**

350 ARENIC ARTISTS  
COMPREHENSIVE MENAGERIE OF THE FINEST ANIMAL SPECIMENS  
40 FUNNY CLOWNS  
2 HERDS OF PERFORMING ELEPHANTS

*Note:* IN THE ONWARD MARCH OF PROGRESSION THE AUTOMOBILE IS SUPERSEDED BY THE HORSE AND A HORSELESS AGE IS FAIRLY PREDICTED. THE OBITUARY OF THE HORSE WILL NEVER BE WRITTEN AS LONG AS THE SPARKS CIRCUS LIVES! THIS ORGANIZATION IS FAMOUS FOR ITS

**HUNDREDS OF BEAUTIFUL HORSES**  
SEE THESE SPLENDID ANIMALS IN THE SENSATIONAL FOX HUNT, EUROPEAN TRAINED HORSE SHOW, MANEGE AND HIGH JUMPING EXHIBITIONS.

**TWO PERFORMANCES DAILY**  
AT 2 AND 8 P.M.  
DOORS OPEN ONE HOUR EARLIER TO PUBLIC, ALLOWING APPLICABLE TIME TO VISIT THE MENAGERIE DEPARTMENT

**GORGEOUS FREE STREET PARADE**  
10:30 A.M.  
RAIN OR SHINE

PRICES: Children Under 10 Years, 35c; Adults, 75c  
SEATS ON SALE CIRCUS DAY AT ROYAL PHARMACY.  
SAME PRICE AS AT SHOW GROUNDS.





heads since opening. John Hegbin, a newcomer to Sparks, had the cookhouse, George Singleton was still getting the canvas up and down after Chuck Connors had unloaded the 9 all-steel flats and Jake Posey and his drivers had moved the wagons to and on the lot. Walter McLain was in charge of the elephants and Franz Woska, besides being the principal wild animal trainer was in charge of all the other menagerie animals. Java Koen was in charge of the new electric lights with seven helpers. To handle the last minute arrangements the show had two 24 hour men, John Hickey and Harry Talbert.

Following Long Island a Sunday run of about 180 miles on June 20 took the show to Holyoke, Mass., for Monday, June 21 to start a two and a half week visit to New England before going into Canada. Here they had only fair attendance in the afternoon but capacity at night. The day at Waltham they had good business despite threatening weather. In Lawrence on Wednesday poor textile business in all the mills there resulted in poor business emphasizing the need for a show to give thought to avoid those communities where economic conditions were poor. The balance of this, the 12th week of the season, took the show to Concord and Laconia, N.H., and finished at Sanford, Me. At Concord they had large crowds but the next day at Laconia business was only fair. Here they used perhaps one of the most unique circus lots in the country at that time. It was on three levels and the side show and midway, and menagerie top, and big top were each on a different level. It was generally called the toboggan lot. Again, in Sanford as the week closed local textile business was in the doldrums but here despite this problem and rain business was good.

The week of June 28 saw the show staying in Maine as it worked its way toward Canada. The last three days of the month it was in Biddeford, Lewiston and Madison. At Biddeford with poor local conditions and rain they had good business. Lewiston gave a light afternoon but a good evening. At Madison Charles Sparks and Mrs.

The air calliope and six cages are shown outside the menagerie tent in 1926. Carver Collection.

Clifton Sparks and son, Clifton, Jr., took a train to Waterville where they visited the folks on the John Robinson Circus. And while they were away Madison gave the show good business. The rest of the week saw the show in Dover-Foxcroft, Houlton and Caribou where the show had its best day of the season to date.

The baseball team with Clifton Sparks pitching was continuing to beat all local teams, usually by good scores. July 4th was a Sunday spent in Bangor with some of the show folks going on a picnic. At the shows next day there were two capacity houses while in the menagerie three tigers were born. The next two days were the last in the United States, Ellsworth and Eastport. Thursday, July 8, the show had crossed the border and was in Canada at St. Stephens, N.B., followed by St. Johns and Fredericton. At St. Johns the train did not arrive until 8:30 resulting in the parade not leaving the

Another famous clown of the 1920s, Harry Davenport, is shown on Sparks in 1925. Eddie Jackson Photo.



lot until 12:30. But a short parade route got the show back in about 45 minutes with the result that the afternoon show was only about fifteen minutes late in starting.

The Sunday run into Halifax was about 250 miles. Only fair time was made with the show not arriving until 3 P.M. In this seaport town of only about 80,000 at that time the show played a two day stand. Both papers, *The Morning Herald* and *The Morning Chronicle*, gave the show excellent after notices praising the show's honest, clean and courteous business methods "which guarantees liberal patronage". The week in Nova Scotia was completed in Kentville, Truro, New Glasgow and Amherst.

The 16th week started July 19 in New Brunswick at Moncton after which came New Castle and Campbellton. From the latter town to Riviere Du Loup the Canadian National Railway gave the show its fastest run of the season going the 189 miles in 5 hours and 55 minutes. At Riviere Du Loup Walter Guice fell from the parallel bars in his aerial act and missed the net. Fortunately he was only slightly injured and was out of the act only for a few days. The week ended with a two day stand in Quebec where the show had its usual good business.

Over the weekend the show made another long run of about 300 miles north to Chicoutimi through the Laurentian Mountains on the Saguenay River. This was followed by a visit to a small town a little west, Roberval. This was a very isolated and sparsely settled area but the show did good business. Then it turned around and overnight made a return run of about 265 miles south to Shawinigan Falls followed by a jump of only 18 miles to Three Rivers with the week closing at St. Jean and Granby. At the latter spot the *Granby Leader* said, "the parade was undoubtedly the best ever seen here. The Sparks people do not exaggerate in their advertising - they show all that is promised. The program offered was of uniform and commendable high standards throughout."

The show now started to move westward through Ontario where it would be for the next two and a half weeks, the first one of which was spent in the northern reaches of the Province at Brockville, Perth, Pembroke, North Bay, North Cobalt and Timmins. Then on August 9 the show began its 19th week at Sudbury followed by Lindsay before it moved to Toronto for a big day. The week ended at St. Thomas, Kitchener and Owen Sound. The final two days came the next week on August 16-17 at Chatham and Sarnia. That week the show was advertising for "fast, experienced billposters and lithographers."

At Chatham at the afternoon show Steve Batty was badly clawed by one of





The Riding Rooneys are featured on this billboard advertising the October 24, 1926 stand of the Sparks Circus in Hattiesburg, Miss. Eddie Jackson Photo.

his lions but was able to crawl under one of the pedestals before losing consciousness. Frank Woska entered the arena and managed to get the lions out and back to their cage in the menagerie before Batty was further injured. He was taken to the Chatham Hospital where he was treated. He was able to leave with the show but it was several days before he was able to resume working his lions. It was almost two years before to the day that he was similarly attacked in Sudbury. A few days before this Frances Widener and Polly Watson were accidentally hurt while working the bulls and were out of the show for a few days.

The show now in its 20th week came back to the States on Wednesday August 18 at Bad Axe, Mich., followed by Alma, Big Rapids and Cadillac. In this weeks *The Billboard* the show was advertising for "Lady menage rider who can do swinging ladder, one clown who has novelty walkarounds. For the side show; Novelty acts, two lady Charleston dancers, colored performers." Next came five days in Michigan at Petoskey, Traverse City, Manistee, Muskegon and Kalamazoo, the week ending in Warsaw, Ind. It was at the end of this week that in response to the above ad that Roy Barrett, clown, joined the show. Then came the 22d week at Richmond and Hamilton, Ohio, not far from Cincinnati, where many folks from *The Billboard* visited and the show was given another complete review. There were virtually no changes from the opening.

In the side show managed by George V. Connor, Billie DeBarrie was the inside lecturer and also did a Punch and Judy show, magic and an original Radio Girl illusion. The other attractions were Maybelle Loving, Hindu sword ladder; Capt. Paul Herold, giant; Harry Conn's Hawaiian and Charleston Dancers; Carlyle Fredrick, novelty musical and xylophone act; Millie DeBarrie's Australian Bird Circus; and Prof. Holloway's Georgia

Minstrels, 18 people mixed company. In the pit show managed by Charles Katz there was a big monkey, hyena, midget horse, den of snakes and a south seas islander. The side show had two ticket boxes on the front and the pit show one.

Hazel Lamb had replaced Hazel Bailey as soprano in the opening spec while Walter Guice had replaced Allen Hauser in the second number working dogs and monkeys. As previously mentioned Dolly Castle was now putting the leopards through their paces in the steel arena instead of Harriett Guilfoyle. In the third display of the football horses again Walter Guice had replaced Allen Hauser who had apparently left the show. In the wild west contingent Hazel Hickey and Grace McLain had added trick riding to their other show responsibilities.

With the arrival of September Sparks was now on its way south for after Hamilton came Winchester, Richmond and Corwin in Kentucky with the week ending at Knoxville. Starting the week September 8 they moved into North Carolina visiting Asheville, Hendersonville, Spartanburg, Charlotte, Salisbury (their old winter quarters town) and High Point. The following week they were in Raleigh, Wilson, Rocky Mount, and Fayetteville before going into South Carolina at Florence and Columbia. The week of September 20 had them in Anderson, Greenville followed by Georgia at Gainesville, Griffin, Newnan and LaGrange. It was sometime during the preceding couple of weeks that Steve Batty, for reasons unknown, left the show. However, he did not take the lions with him and the act remained on the show being worked by Franz Woska.

The next week starting September 27 at Columbus, Georgia, was followed by Albany, Thomasville, Valdosta, Brunswick, and Waycross. At Waycross they had been preceded by the Walter L. Main Circus on September 11 and the Christy Bros. Circus on September 18. However, Sparks had sent in a flying squad of billers ahead of both of these shows and got most of the ideal billing spots.



Two work elephants are shown pulling three cages to the lot of the Sparks show in 1926. Two additional elephants follow pulling three more cages. Eddie Jackson Photo.

The result was good business even though they had followed the other two shows by two weeks.

Sparks Circus now moved into Florida for two weeks. The first week there had them in Sanford, Orlando, Lakeland, Tampa and Bradenton. Tampa was a two day stand October 7-8 under the auspices of the Shrine. There were large crowds at all four shows. The 28th week starting October 11 was spent in St. Petersburg and Clearwater, both for all practical purposes suburbs of Tampa, Ocala, Gainesville, and Jacksonville. This latter was also a two day stand. The show was now again to move into Georgia for almost two weeks, the first in Cordale, Milledgeville, Washington, Elberton, Athens and Covington, while the second was in Marietta, Rome, Carrolton, Thomaston, Fort Valley and closing in Alabama at Opelika.

The next to last week of the tour opened November 1 in Alabama at Selma followed by Demopolis and Mobile. Then came three days back in Florida at Pensacola, Chipley and Panama City. The circus now started its last full week in Dothan, Ala., November 8 and then moved to Georgia at Americus, Vidalia, Macon where it had opened the season seven months earlier, Dublin and Statesboro. The last stand of the season was Monday, November 15 at Savannah where threats of rain kept the afternoon crowds down.

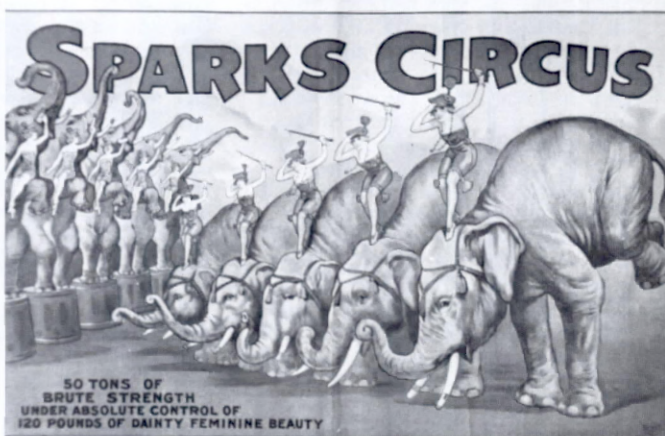
The advance car when it closed at Savannah, October 30, finished a season in which it did not lose a day. At the finish it had Randolph, the manager; Harry Mack, press; a boss billposter with seven men; a boss lithographer with eight men; a steward, pastemaker and porter - 22 men. The car, as did the show following it, covered 15,034 miles. The season, two weeks and about 2,500 miles shorter than the 1925 season, was in general most successful.



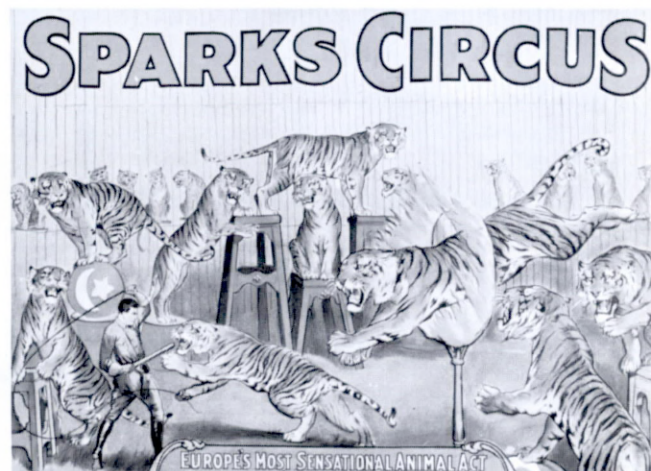
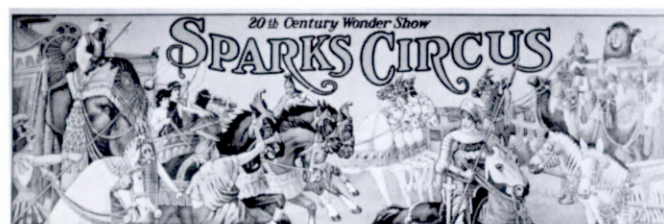
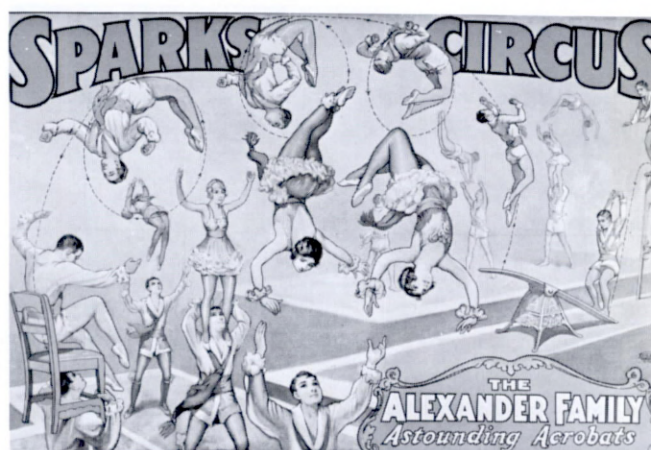
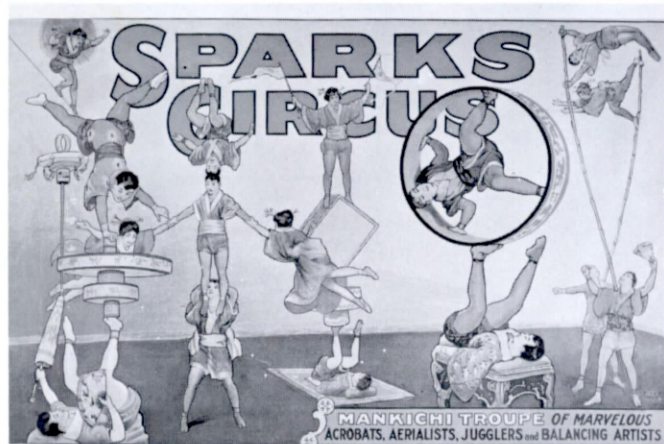
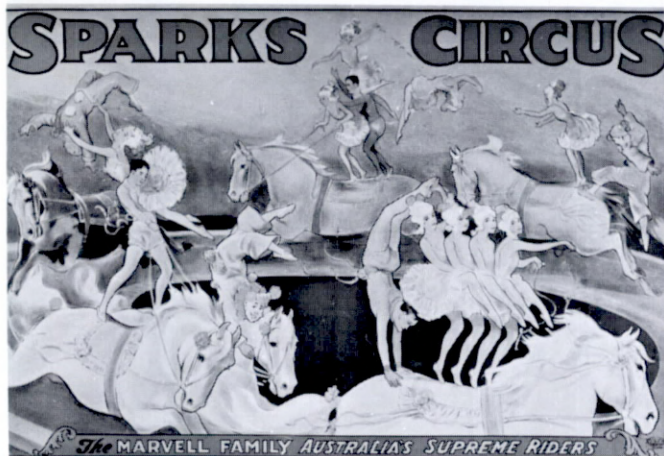
# Sparks Circus

## 1925 Lithos

This group of lithos was done by the Erie Litho Co. for Sparks and were used in 1925. "20th Century Wonder Show" was used for the first time during the 1925 season. All lithos are from the Circus World Museum Collection.









Attention

# CLOWN BUFFS



CROCK



KARADOZ



CUCABA



JOHN DURANG



GROS-GUILLAUME



TOM BELDING

As the author-artist, creator of the book soon to be published, *The Greatest Clowns of History*, I am making available, in limited numbers, some 11" x 16" BLACK & WHITE PRINTS adapted from the pen, brush, and ink drawings that will be used to illustrate the new book.

The first in the series of PRINTS will be such great clowns of history as **CUCABA**, the scourge of the Spaniards in the 17th Century; **KARADOZ**, jester to a Saracen king in the 12th Century; **JOHN DURANG**, first American-born clown; **CROCK**, the first truly sad clown; **TOM BELDING**, the original Augusta Clown; and **GROSGUILLAUME**, the little Baker of Paris, who was the first white-face (not Joey Grimaldi).

Each PRINT will be accompanied by as complete a BIOGRAPHY as has been made available to me by historians, researchers, museums, libraries and through my own 20 years of research.

**START BUILDING YOUR COLLECTION OF THE GREATEST CLOWNS OF HISTORY PRINTS NOW. Ideal for Office or Home.**

THE SET OF THE ABOVE SIX PRINTS—\$18.00. PURCHASED INDIVIDUALLY AT \$3.75 EACH. ALLOW FOR 30 TO 60 DAYS FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE PRINTS AND THE BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS. **GUARANTEED REFUND ON ALL PURCHASES IF BOTH THE PRINTS AND BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS ARE RETURNED IN GOOD CONDITION WITHIN 15 DAYS.**

To: **William A. Foote, 8554 Amador, Yucca Valley, Calif. 92284**

Please send to me, with MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE REFUND (with exception of postage and handling charges), the advertised SET of the SIX HISTORICAL CLOWN PRINTS, INCLUDING THE BIOGRAPHIES.

PAYMENT ENCLOSED FOR THE SET ..... \$18.00

Plus for postage and handling ..... \$ 2.00

Note: For Calif. residents add 6% to the \$18.00

**Not interested in receiving the Set of Six**, but please send me the following clowns at \$3.75 each, plus 1.00 for postage and handling. (Note: Calif. residents add 6% to the total purchase price.)

The individual clown prints I want are as follows:

Name

Street Address

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State

Zip Code